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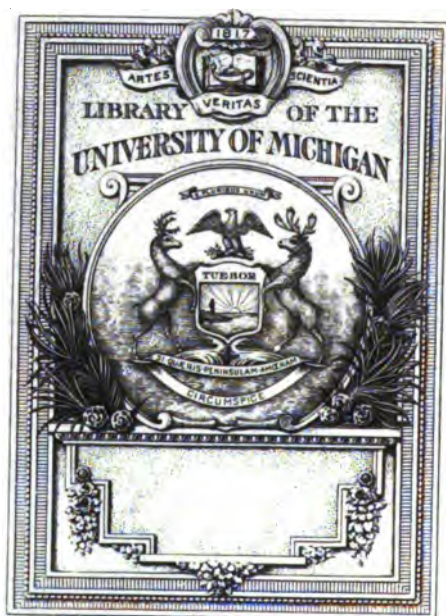
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IRISH TALES.

BY

MICHAEL BANIM,

SURVIVOR OF THE "O'HARA FAMILY,"

AUTHOR OF "CROMOORE OF THE BILHOOK," AND SEVERAL OTHERS
OF THE "O'HARA TALES."



LONDON :

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1866.

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Dedication.

TO

HIS EXCELLENCY THE EARL OF CARLISLE,

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

My Lord,

In acknowledgment of your kindness to my late brother, to his child, and to his widow, and in testimony of my personal gratitude for the services rendered to myself,—it is a gratification to me to avail myself of this opportunity of avowing my obligations by dedicating these volumes to you.

With the hope that the offering may not be unworthy of one, even less distinguished by his high station than by his literary rank, and his benevolence of nature,

I have the honor, my Lord,

To subscribe myself,

Your Lordship's obliged Servant,

MICHAEL BANIM.

Kilkenny, November 25, 1863.

Libr.
McGiff
b. 24-26
22343

PREFACE.

It appears to me that, in a greater degree perhaps than might be necessary with other books, this Tale requires a few words of preface.

So far back as the year 1825—now, alas! forty years ago,—I made my first essay as a story-teller, in conjunction with my beloved brother, the late John Banim.

He had, before that date, taken up the profession—if such it may be called—of a literary man. He had laid by the painter's pallet, which he had in the first instance adopted as his escutcheon, and had mounted the insignia of his future vocation,—the pen. By the pen he was thenceforth to gain his subsistence.

He communicated to me his intention of writing some tales descriptive of Irish life and manners: truthful delineations he intended they should be. I urged him to do so, and reminded him of certain occurrences related to us when we were boys.

“I cannot take up your ideas,” my brother said; “you must sit down and commit them to paper yourself.”

After much persuasion, I complied with his request, and, devoting my spare time to the task assigned me, the result was the tale, the authorship of which is avowed on the title-page to these volumes.

Thenceforward my brother and I co-operated as joint producers of the tales appearing from time to time under the title of “Tales by the O’Hara Family,” my brother residing in London, while I remained where I still live, in, as it is called, “the faire citie” of Kilkenny.

My brother’s *nom de plume* was Barnes O’Hara;

mine, Abel O'Hara. And thus it was that we carried on our partnership :—

We wrought simultaneously, each at his own conception. The productions of Barnes O'Hara were transmitted to Abel, and those of Abel to Barnes ; and our understanding was, that each was at liberty to trim and prune, and, if need were, to alter the manuscript of the other.

We never had a disagreement, as to any liberties taken the one with the other : the suggestions of Abel to Barnes, or of Barnes to Abel, were implicitly adopted by both without a question. Thus we continued to go on together, until my brother, in consequence of the excessive application of his mind, was disabled by the malady which, after many years of suffering, terminated his life, while yet in the prime of manhood as to years.

For some time subsequent to his death, I felt a dislike to follow singly the occupation he and I had pursued together ; at length I published a tale named "Clough Fionn," in the Dublin University

Magazine; "The Town of the Cascades," I now offer as the second single-handed production of "The Survivor of the O'Hara family."

I have never been, as my brother was, a literary man by profession. I have always had an occupation, distinct from that of authorship: and almost all through, my devotion to my pen has been desultory.

It is not necessary I should here particularize the Tales contributed by me to the O'Hara series, as Abel O'Hara; I will merely state, that they were not a few.

Why do I give, in the shape of a preface, this short biographical sketch?

Plainly, because I would insinuate thereby, that I am not altogether a stranger, making my first appearance on the literary stage. I venture to claim recognition as an acquaintance of some standing.

I know full well, that no degree of intimacy will or ought to influence the reading public, if the fare offered be unpalatable or unfit to be served up.

With this conviction on my mind, and abiding judgment,—fair, honest judgment I know I shall receive from the tribunal before which I appear,—I offer “The Town of the Cascades” as a single-handed production of the formerly Abel O’Hara, now—

The Reader’s very humble servant,

MICHAEL BANIM.

Kilkenny, 25th November, 1863.

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THE TOWN OF THE CASCADES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE BORNOCH BATHING-PLACE.

THE extent of my experience as a traveller is limited enough. My absences from the spot to which I have been affixed since I was born, have been few and far between. In my aberrations I have never required a clue to enable me to retrace my steps. Foreign countries I cannot speak of from personal observation, and even through my own "Green Isle," my wanderings have not been wide, nor farther from the centre round which I revolve than such a distance as a two days' journey would accomplish.

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Yet, if one diverge ever so little from the limit of his own domestic tether, something will present itself not before noticed,—some local distinction, unique, mayhap, in character,—some difference of habit, or manner, or mode of expression, distinguishing the “natives” of new ground. So that if one’s gusto for novelty be simple, such as is relished by the palate unaccustomed to highly-spiced dishes, food to gratify it may be found almost anywhere.

Whenever I can command even a short relaxation from the every-day labour of my domiciliary mill, I like to go about “poking my nose” here and there and everywhere, and I like to examine leisurely and closely anything that is even partially new to me.

During the autumn, some years ago,—no matter how many,—I had a fortnight’s holiday. This, to me, long period of leisure, I spent at an out-of-the-way bathing-place on the coast of Clare. And there, in one of my “poking” deviations from headquarters, I picked up the materials for the narrative I am about to relate.

I call what is to follow a narrative, not a tale. It

will not be a tale, properly so called. You will see, if you have the patience to read it, that there is no hero or heroine, strictly speaking ;—that it wants what every one knows to be the main-spring of a tale, and what sets all the wheels busily turning,—namely, an intricate and embarrassing love affair. You will see that I have no romantic adventures to recite ;—in fact that there are none of the statutable requisites to enable the production to rank as a tale. This then is to be simply a narrative.

At my out-of-the-way Clare-coast bathing place, the visitors who come there are called by the permanent residents "*Forneyaghs*" which Irish word means "*sea-divers*." And the natives are known by another local appellation—they are "*Bornochs*." The Forneyaghs are regarded as birds of passage who frequent the Bornoch-bay periodically only, their main occupation while there being to submerge themselves three or four times daily under the waves that roll in from the Atlantic for their use. This they continue to do while the fine weather lasts, but as winter approaches they take flight with

the swallows to another land. The "Bornochs" or natives are, on the contrary, fixed to the spot, and must there remain during all seasons and in all weathers. "Bornoch" is the Irish name for limpit, which species of mollusca abound along the coast, remaining fastened to the rocks all the year round.

So, to use the language of the locality, I was a "Forneyagh" at this unfashionable place of resort during the period of autumn, some years since.

A description of the "Bornochs" or Bornoch village, as I shall call it, not being necessary to my purpose, I will not enter on it. It will be sufficient here to say, that the village of the Bornochs stands above a nearly circular bay opening into the wide Atlantic, which rolls along in majesty; and that the waves, which abroad rise mountain high, are here broken against a strand, smooth and level beneath the feet of the "Forneyaghs" who disport in the waters. I may add, what I found in my own instance to be true, that the air about is salubrious and health-giving to the sea-divers.

Two miles inland from the Bornoch village is what I believe I must call a town. Of much more importance it is than the humble bathing-place. It is too pretentious to be classed as a village, and yet hardly of sufficient extent to deserve the appellation of "town." Still, to avoid giving offence I will so name it. There may be, houses and huts as they stand, three hundred dwellings within the precincts of this town. It is admitted by census-takers that Irish houses contain as many inmates, to speak moderately, as the houses of any other country.—And it is a peculiarity which, I believe, has puzzled political economists, that the smaller the houses the more close their resemblance to beehives (as regards population). The three hundred houses forming the town of which I now speak, contained, I should say, two thousand "souls" big and little, young and old.

There is a main street in this town to the extent of eighty or one hundred houses on either side. A church terminates the view down the main street. It is plain to see that many well-to-do people are

located here, witness the good, carefully-kept dwellings, and the display of shop-wares—neither scanty nor unattractive. It is not difficult as you pass along to discover the magnates of the place in the busy, thriving owners of extensive establishments, or to separate from these the struggling, hard-pressed traders. You can easily understand what the pompous carriage of the first, and the unpretentious bearing of the others signifies. And still easier is it to recognize those who have nothing at all to boast of in a worldly way. You will find the great, the less, and the least, with a locally established scale for measurement, wherever there is a congregation of human beings.

There are many dingy cabins in the neighbourhood of the main street, and the place has also its “genteel” residences,—small houses where “genteel” people live. In the outskirts there is a good Roman Catholic place of worship, and a plain but extensive building on a height particularly attracted my notice. I learned it was a convent school. But as I do not intend to become the typo-

graphist of this "town," I will not enter further into particulars, except where they will answer my purpose.

The walk from the village of the Bornochs to this more important town of —, is through a country of singularly uneven surface, of which more hereafter. You enter by a road running parallel with a river which flows at your left hand, its banks, as you near the town, being clothed with fine old trees. From this road you pass over the bridge spanning the river. If you pause on this bridge, and you can hardly avoid doing so (you will be curious to learn why the water is so noisy in its passage), you will see, immediately below you a succession of cascades, —the whole breadth of the water falling from one rocky ledge to another in pellucid sheets, foaming and tossing, and falling over another, and another, and another ledge;—then rushing rapidly onward, and finally, flowing calmly and smoothly, as if fatigued by so many somersaults, until it is lost to view in its curves round wooded heights that rise

above it on either side. You will see woods mounting above the river to your right and left ; and you will see, overtopping the woods, the mansion of the owner of the district, all forming an attractive but not extensive prospect.

Crossing to the opposite parapet of the bridge, the river is seen in its approach to the cataracts. It is curling in dimpled eddies round small, shrubby islands,—smiling pleasantly after its escapades farther up, where it had had to bound headlong over other rocky impediments to its progress. These far-up falls you cannot see from where you stand, but I will bring them under your notice shortly from another point of observation.

Before quitting our present position, however, I will direct your attention to two points. Looking up the river, you will see that the banks, right and left, rise pretty high above it, and that there are houses built along those elevated banks. Those to the left you need not particularly notice, but those topping the right bank—those with the broken and

uneven footway leading to them—demand some attention. Look at them, and you will understand that they must have been originally intended as residences for “genteel people.” You will probably agree with me, that the locality was not well chosen for the class of tenants called in the town of — “genteel ;” for immediately below you will see bare-footed women, midleg in the water, thumping articles of household wear with wooden instruments, —“beetling clothes” is the term affixed to the occupation. And you will see, near the sturdy *blanchisseuses*, horses, with ostlers bestriding them, drinking the water. “Genteel” people would not readily subject themselves to such annoyances. And I conclude that these houses to the right were what is called a bad speculation.

Whether my judgment be right or wrong in this matter, it is evident that the houses have of late been neglected. They are two stories high, and they have windows at each side of their hall-doors. It is evident, however, that a paint-brush has not been applied to these doors for a very long time ; and

they are all knockerless, though, it is to be presumed, originally possessed of such appendages. Many of the windows, too, are broken and patched with paper, whilst window-shutters hang by one hinge, or have been used as temporary barriers against the entrance of too much wind and rain. The water-spouts hang in broken scraps here and there, while the unprotected house-fronts are dingy and discoloured—"seedy" houses I will call them, adopting the term applied to persons whose outward garb is threadbare and out-of-elbows.

Having duly remarked these half-dozen "seedy" or "shabby-genteel" little houses, I will ask you to carry your eye to the left bank of the river. You will see there a cluster of inferior dwellings, with one or two of more consideration rising above them. But the principal object to which I point is a ruinous building topping a hill of considerable elevation, this hill covered with trees from base to summit. So, at least, it appears to us.

I have directed attention to the small, neglected houses to the right of the river, and to the ruin

topping the wooded hill on the left, as to these I shall have to refer hereafter. As a further prelude to the events I have to relate, I will take a view of a residence contiguous to the town, wherein the principal personages of my narrative dwelt.

Passing from the bridge, and going a short distance along the main street, and then turning short down by the post-office, which is in a hollow (a "genteel" little house by-the-way), a broad and well-kept carriage-road is gained, running parallel with the river, and overhung with lofty trees. This road leads to the mansion-house I have pointed out from the bridge as elevated above the wooded heights that overlook the cascades. Before reaching the entrance gates to the grounds of this mansion, a view is obtained, by looking over a low wall to the right, of a pretty cottage structure. It is a low building, but of some extent. The casement windows are nearly hidden by the evergreens that cover the entire front, but you can see their white muslin draperies fluttering in the breeze. Through the green covering of the cottage, abundance of

roses of every hue and of roseate fragrance, glisten whenever roses bloom. A rustic porch supporting graceful creeping plants shades the entrance door, and this is flanked on either side by a goodly show of exotics in flower-pot stands. Adjoining the road is a garden well stocked with fruit trees and choice vegetables, and beyond this, nearer to the cottage, and separated by a carefully clipped hedge, is ample space for the exclusive cultivation of flowers. To the right of the cottage, and separated from the gardens by another trim hedge is a smooth field of emerald green studded with trees, whose shadows, when the sun shines, chequer the surface. In the fruit and vegetable garden there is a leafy bower, and in the emerald green field another. From the first bower a person sitting on its rustic bench can see the river cascades, and the verdant slopes beyond, and the woody summits; and the view of the falling waters, and the voice of the falling waters, and the green hill-sides, and the varying foliage, produce a pleasant and dreamy effect on the mind. From the second bower in the emerald field

the cottage only, and its gardens, and the trees beyond, are visible. But the dash of the river as it descends is heard; somewhat clamorous, but soothing and musical, as the sound of falling waters always is.

CHAPTER II.

“THE TOWN OF THE CASCADES.” THE HILL-TOP
CHURCHYARD.

I SHALL call the little town I have partially described by a name of my own bestowing, “The Town of the Cascades.” And by this name it will in future be recognized.

During my fortnight’s sojourn as a “Forneyagh,” in the sea-coast village of the Bornochs, I paid frequent visits to the “Town of the Cascades,” for the purpose of “poking my nose” in every direction. I have pointed out an abrupt, wooded hill, seen from the bridge when looking up the river, this hill bearing on its summit a ruinous building. One of my poking expeditions was to this ruin.

My way thither was through a very wretched out-

let, where half the grimy cabins were partially tumbled down, and the people dwelling in the few that remained, to all appearance the poorest of the poor. I was obliged to bend my back most inconveniently while scaling this dilapidated street of hovels. On the apex of the ascent was the ruin I had seen from below. I found that it stood in the centre of an enclosed space, and in the enclosing wall were projecting steps that enabled me to mount up and enter an elevated burial-ground, in the centre of which was the ruin I had almost strained my spine to reach.

Like many an object of desire I have scrambled after during my life, I found, now I had gained my goal, that in the roofless building I examined there was nothing to repay me for the trouble I had taken. When looking upwards from the bridge, I had taken it for granted that I was to find some interesting relic of former days. I found no such thing. I could learn that a rude, primitive place of worship had occupied the same space at some unrecorded date. But I now stood by a comparatively

modern structure, four roofless walls, without antiquity, or architectural decoration, or legend appertaining, to give them value. A roofless barn would have been as interesting an object for scrutiny.

The history of the hill-top ruin is this. It had been erected on the site of an ancient crypt forty years previous to my visit, and was used as a church, The devotion of its frequenters was not, however, sufficiently ardent to neutralize the fatigue encountered while mounting up, or to reconcile them to the squalor witnessed during the weekly pilgrimage. So the edifice was abandoned, and a new church built of easy access, requiring no more than a modicum of pious zeal to reach it, and in the approach to which there need be no brushing of skirts with anti-christian poverty. The new church I have noticed before, as terminating the view down the main street of my "Town of the Cascades."

Seldom, however, do we encounter unmitigated disappointment. If the object we aspire to be misunderstood by reason of its distance, or from the vivid colouring of imagination, we may, provided we

do not give ourselves up to lamentations over our mistake, find that the labour of attainment has not been altogether profitless. This not very profound reflection I made as I sat on a gravestone in the high-up churchyard I had gained.

The excursion of the eye over an extended plain, meandering through which you can note the slow progress of a river gently flowing, and where you can see trim meadows, and clipped hedges, and embowered farm-houses, and a mansion with woods clustering around, and villages, and village-spires, and sheep and kine, and people busy at their tasks—the excursion of the eye, I say, over a landscape such as these objects make up—is most cheering and grateful to the spirit. But to please what may be the idiosyncrasy of my taste, the country I now viewed around me was more attractive and mettlesome. As I looked down from my elevated point of observation, I formed on the spot a geological system of my own to account for the appearance of things. To adopt Cowper's view of the subject, I dropped my own "bucket" into my own "empty well." I

supposed that at some time or other, when the portion of our globe beneath me was settling into consistency, the area my eye took in must have been in a state of turbulent ebullition on a large scale, the fluid matter surging and boiling, and tumbling and tossing, and rising up in gigantic inflations and irregular heavings. I further supposed that while the throes of the agitated mass were most excessive and obstreperous, a sudden refrigeration had taken place, and that while yet rising and falling furiously, the boiling fluid had become solidified. Following my theory, which I have propounded to suit my purpose, I was now perched on the summit of one of the most riotous of the heaving waves.

Whether I looked east or west, north or south, there were nothing but hills and hollows. Some of these hills were conical, some more rounded in form, some ridgy and craggy, some of easy ascent, some precipitous—in fact, every form of hill you can conceive was there—no level spot—no plains—all irregularity. The greater number of the hills were green or cultivated, many were heath-clad,

some rocky and barren. Hills, hills, hills, endless hills! And then there were dells, and hollows, and defiles also, without limit. There were little wooded valleys, the foliage sometimes creeping up the adjacent ascents; there were dells choked up with furze and brushwood; there were gloomy, untraceable defiles—the whole appearance of the land vouching for the plausibility of my geological theory.

This topsy-turvy aspect of nature did not want its signs of life. Farm-houses, perched in shady spots, were numerous. And there were workers on the soil. I could see reapers, and hay-makers, and turf-cutters. And there were cattle up the hill-sides, and down in the hollows.

Then again, nothing could be more fantastic than the play of light and shadow over the uneven surface. Yonder, a spot of sunshine, close thereto, deep shadow—sunshine and shadow alternating in infinite variety wherever I looked from my grave-stone observatory. The bridge from which I had ascended was so immediately below me that I could not see it, but the sound of the tumbling river came to me, mellow and refreshing.

The sun, in his progress to the west, threw his lustre more positively in that direction than to north, or south, or east, and the features of the scene so lighted attracted my particular notice.

At the farthest point of vision I could see the ocean—the Bornoeh bay I judged it to be—reflecting the full lustre of the sun's rays. I could trace the windings of the river for two miles of its course as it flowed towards me, rushing through a narrow dell, impatient and hurried. Here woods rose above it—there it chafed against rocks—anon the motion was grave and somewhat level. There was a mill on its banks, a mile away. I could not hear the clatter of the wheel, but I could discern its motion as it flung the spray from it in its evolutions. A favourable position for a mill that must be, for just above its site I could see the river precipitated down from a considerable height, the water glittering like a sheet of polished silver as it fell.

From the landscape below me I brought my inspection nearer home, to the immediate spot around.

CHAPTER III.

THE HILL-TOP CHURCHYARD, CONTINUED.

It is a truism neither new nor profound, that the visit to a churchyard induces the visitor to become a moralizer. And no wonder. The promptings to serious thought are everywhere around. For my own part, however, I seldom moralize in such places : in the present instance my cogitations were anything but deep or sombre.

Cemeteries on an extensive scale have been not unaptly termed "cities," and this hill-top place of rest to the weary might in that sense be called a "village of the dead." It was circumscribed in space, descending very little below the crown of the nearly-conical elevation. But a very populous vil-

lage it seemed to be ; not an inch of it unoccupied. For the most part its inhabitants must have been shoulder to shoulder as they lay "with their toes to the daisies." A good number of tombstones lay about—oblong slabs supported on low walls of masonry. These marked the final abodes of the defunct who had held a certain status while over-ground,—who had been thriving folk,—who had lived in snug houses, typified by comfortable "tombs" placed above them here. There were many ornamented head-stones, too, standing upright, some tall, some of middle height, some dwarfish. It was plain to me that beneath these, persons of lesser grade slept, while the respective heights of the head-stones might fairly be taken as exemplifying a descending scale in the sleeper's rank while his eyes possessed "speculation." There were a few—very few—railed-in monuments where aristocratic remnants lay apart from the throng. There were so-called "vaults" too, and of unique construction those vaults were, and thus formed, as far as I could judge. A portion of the slaty rock composing the hill being quarried away,

a recess was shaped : this was arched over, and the arch covered with sods : the front was then closed up, partly by masonry, and partly by a monumental slate : within the chamber thus formed the ornamented coffin was placed, where it reposed unsoiled by the churchyard clay. These " vaults " I regarded as the abodes of the " genteel " dwellers on the hill-top.

But these distinguishing marks were few in the high-up " village of the dead," as compared with the abodes of the unnoted population ; those who had dwelt in hovels while alive outnumbered all the others by far. A slight elevation above the surface denoted *their* homes, a rough stone here and there, but of remembered shape, serving to mark to the kneelers who came of a Sunday to pray for those they had loved, where the remains of their dear ones lay.

Generally speaking, the Irish are religiously respectful towards the manes of their deceased relatives. But here one was pained by the sight of human remains overground. There is, however,

an inhospitable soil on this hill top ; it must have been but half true to say, when the aborigines were interred here, that they had been "consigned to Mother Earth;"—little or no "earth," properly speaking, must there have been to receive them. At the present moment a very scanty sod is immediately underfoot ; the early occupiers must have been laid in "narrow houses" scooped out from the rock. Now, when a new dweller comes, there is not room for him ; an old inhabitant must be either entirely or partially displaced to give the incoming tenant accommodation. "Ejectment" must be resorted to here, as with the living, and hence the unsightly appearance of human relics and mouldering coffin-boards.

We take the monumental statuary of Westminster Abbey or of Père la Chaise as a fair average criterion whereby to form a judgment of respective artistic progress, in a national sense. And I see no reason why a parity should not exist, making all due allowances, as regards the stony-hearted churchyard of which I now write. I think the products of the

artist's chisel on the memorials of the dead in a country churchyard, offer reliable evidences as to the degree of sculptural skill attained in the locality.

I go farther even. From the tombstones and head-stones in a churchyard, I judge of the artistic gusto of the inhabitants of a certain area, taking the burial-place as the centre of a circle. I take it for granted that no one will pay for, and place over the remains he venerates, any production that does not come up to his idea of what the sculptor's chisel ought to realize. Reasoning thus, I arrive at two very important pieces of information; viz., the artistic skill of the district sculptor, and the artistic appreciation of his patrons. In other words, I thus obtain a reliable insight into the degree of civilization prevailing around me.

But before I examine the sculpture, I must notice what I regard as an example of praiseworthy economy and, I would call it, of wise forethought, which might elsewhere be followed with advantage: the ideas of one district transplanted to another, like the products of the soil, are often improved by

transmission. The monumental inscriptions on tomb or headstone were stereotyped repetitions, the one of the other; scarcely a deviation in any instance. The name of the person to whose memory the tablet had been inscribed was first given, with the age at time of death, and the date of demise. The reader was next made acquainted with him at whose expense the memorial had been raised, where he lived, and what occupation he followed. And then came the information that the monument had been erected in commemoration of a dead wife or husband, or father, or mother, as the case might be—and not only in commemoration of that dead person, but also of his or her posterity *ad infinitum*,—of the posterity then alive and well,—of the actual raiser of the monument,—of the scions of the family yet unborn. At the extreme termination of the mausoleum slab the usual petition, “*Requiescat in pace*,” was chiselled, a large space being thus left whereon to inscribe the names of “the posterity” as they dropped off and came to the final home provided for them. I need not enlarge on the advan-

tages of such epitaphs as these in an economical point of view, or as a sage proviso against the possible falling off of worldly means, where such might happen to the posterity.

A connoisseur in painting will decide, from the tone of colouring, the mannerism of touch, and the peculiar ideality, as to the master who produced a doubtful picture. In like manner I was able to discern that the same artist's chisel had carved all the funereal sculptures that fell under my notice.

A representation of the crucifixion I found to be a favourite conception. I am deterred by the sacredness of it from criticising the manner in which this subject was dealt with. The same feeling does not control me, however, with regard to the angels and doves flying about in every direction, nor hold me back from passing a traveller's judgment on the other bas-reliefs embellishing the monuments.

There were certain characteristics distinguishing the angels I found here from any I had seen elsewhere, as the product of pencil or of mallet. None of the angels in this "village of the dead" were at

rest: all were in full flight, as if eagerly bent on the execution of a mission. They were all devoid of arms too, and the wings were inserted, not at their backs, where angels' wings are generally placed, but sprang immediately from the socket of the shoulder joint. The wings were not pointed in shape, that is, they were as unlike the wings of a swallow as could possibly be; indeed they bore no resemblance to the wings of any bird of the air that I know of. From the insertion to the extreme point the plumes were all of the same length, each plume shaped after the fashion of a horse-chestnut leaf, and indented pretty much alike. By this construction of wing, I understood the artist to convey the idea that his angels were better adapted for long flights than for speed. All the celestial messengers were without attire, and all so thin and spare that you could count the ribs along their sides. At first I could not reconcile this cadaverous appearance with my preconceived idea of angelic beauty. But on reflection, I understood it as a matter-of-fact delineation of ethereality.

A certain local mark of celestial mission I must not pass, inasmuch as a due regard of the insignia, when once understood, enabled me to correct my error when doubtful as to the being I examined. Sprouting from the head of each angel was a small cross,—not always elegantly formed, I must admit, and not always springing from the same place. Sometimes the small cross rose up from the centre of the forehead, sometimes from the right temple, and in some instances from the left. Although I have bestowed some attention on the matter, I have not been able up to this to satisfy myself why the artist should have affixed the emblem so differently, unless he would thereby denote a variety of individual character; the steady angel, I should say, wearing his cross in the centre of his forehead, the rakish angel over the left temple, the most intelligent, above the right.

There seemed to be grades of angels too. One I irreverently mistook at the first glance for the representation of an owl. The large, staring eyes, the solemnity of the fleshless face, the beak-like sharp-

ness of nose, the disposition of the hair, and a legless body, clipped round as if with a shears where the legs should spring from, led me to form this erroneous judgment, when the small cross above the forehead set me right. The want of legs in this instance I understood as typical of inferior rank. Another, having a cross springing up in the centre of the forehead, directly over the nose, and having, moreover two other crosses, one over each temple, I had no hesitation in regarding as an archangel.

I was particularly struck with the idea conveyed by the attitude of a third celestial. His ethereal legs (that is, ethereally denuded of human flesh) were carelessly crossed over each other above the knees, while he was upborne on his expansive and umbrageous pinions. I understood the pose to mean, that flying was no inconvenience to him, and that he enjoyed it.

Above a chalice the angel Gabriel soared,—his trumpet, fully as long as himself, plainly establishing his identity as the angel Gabriel. Both of the skin-

and-bone legs of the angel Gabriel were kicked up behind his back to the height of his shoulder. Certainly no disposition of limb would more distinctly denote what I took to be the artist's idea,—the intensity and vigour with which he discharged his mission of sounding the summons to the dead. I should remark that the angel Gabriel alone, of all angels round, was provided with a hand and arm, to enable him to grasp his trumpet. One only was given him; he had no necessity for a second, as he did not blow two trumpets.

I have said I would not exercise my critical propensities where the subject of the crucifixion called forth the artist's genius. This subject, with angels, and chalices, and doves were the chosen delineations around me. I must in candour admit that the chalices were not after any classic design I remember to have seen. And I must farther give it as my judgment that the doves were chiselled so as to give a character of pertness not belonging to this gentle bird. I am more inclined to bestow eulogy than condemnation, yet I must say that these monumental

doves bore a strong resemblance to sparrows,—as if the artist had adopted for his models the saucy birds he was accustomed every day to see.

As I perambulated over the graves, making my observations, I paused before one of the peculiarly constructed “vaults” I have described. I was induced to do so, as the inscriptions on the tablet varied somewhat from what I have called the stereotype that generally prevailed. I copy it from my note-book :—

“ Erected over the remains of his dearly beloved and sainted mother, by Richard O’Meara.

In testimony of his love for her while living .

And his reverence for her Memory.

Christian Reader,

Kneel and pray for a happy Eternity to the soul of

Mrs. Ellen O’Meara,

Who lies buried here—and who
died in her thirtieth year.

Requiescat in pace.”

There was in this epitaph a tone of simple, unostentatious affection that interested me, and I obeyed the call made upon me. I knelt and prayed, as the son asked me to do. I then scanned the inscription

over, and was engaged imagining a biography for this young wife, when a low musical voice accosted me. Even the Irish brogue can be made musical by a pleasant, plaintive voice.

“May your prayer be heard, Sir, an’ I am sure it will. If she isn’t a blessed saint already she will be one. For she was good,—an’ innocent,—an’ comely. She died young, poor soul,—an’ to my belief she died broken-hearted.”

These words were addressed to me by a woman who was engaged spreading out her laundry on the gravestones. And verily no better spot could she have found for her purpose than the hill-top churchyard. For the sun shone down fully there; and there was a pleasant autumn breeze waving the rank grass and nettles, useful for her purpose as well as pleasant to the cheek. I had before casually noticed the woman; I now looked at her more closely. Never, no matter where, had I seen a pleasanter-looking person. I should say she might be about the age mentioned as that of Ellen O’Meara, for whom I had been praying, at the time of her

death,—thirty or thereabouts. She was in very humble garb, but there was a cleanliness and tidiness in her apparel, and in her manner of wearing it. I never saw a cap of more snowy whiteness than that which covered her wavy auburn hair; and to this there was imparted, by the ornamental muslin tie that fastened behind, an air of taste and simple decoration that struck me as very becoming. I saw that her legs were without stockings, and that her ankles were tiny and nicely rounded, and that as much as I saw above the ankle denoted symmetry. Although she spoke to me, I would say, sadly,—yet when I looked in her face there was a smile dimpling it. Not a smile of gaiety, certainly not. The smile of a kindly sympathizing nature it was. The hazel eyes beamed too, with the same expression. “This woman,” I said to myself, “is a gentle, amiable, placid creature, cheerful, and hopeful, and blessed with peace of heart.” Her smile and look told me all this. As it is very vulgarly expressed, I forthwith “cottoned to her.”

“You knew the person who lies buried here?” I asked.

"Oh! then surely I did—knew her well,—and loved her well. 'Twas in my arms she drew her last breath, my poor, loving sufferer!—May Heaven be your bed!"

She bowed her head, crossed her forehead, and looked upward fervently as she said this. And yet she smiled notwithstanding. I approached, and sat on a tomb near her.

"Every grave here," I said—I felt, somehow, she would understand me,—“every grave here has a tale connected with it, if one could only hold converse with the tenants.”

"Indeed, Sir, what you say is truth. There was never one born that couldn't tell something worth hearing."

"I should like to know something of the young wife whose epitaph I have been reading."

"An' how do you know but I'd tell it to you?"

The smile changed; its sadness partly passed away. She now smiled good-humouredly and her dimples were deeply indented.

"I shall be most thankful if you will."

"You're not from these parts, Sir—I'll go bail you're a Forneyagh?"

"A Forneyagh I am, verily."

"An' you're over among the Bornochs?"

"You have guessed aright."

"Is it making too free to ask where you're stopping there?"

"Not in the least too free. I have put up my quarters at the little hotel immediately fronting the sea."

Here my questioner bent her head a little towards her left shoulder, and looked at me askance, and her smile became mirthful, and her hazel eyes twinkled.

"I'd lay a bet that Miss Jenny gives you good ating an' dhrinking?"

"Not better. Quite as good as I need wish for."

"Ham an' chickens?"

"Yes."

"An' roast an' boiled beef an' mutton, an' turkeys, an' all sorts?"

“Exactly.”

“An’ fried eggs,—an’ good tay,—an’ fish alive out of the bay?”

“She does indeed—all this.”

“Ah!—then how I pity you, my poor man!”

And she bent her head and laughed a tiny laugh. During the colloquy she continued to manipulate her clothes as she placed them to dry.

“Miss Jenny Ryan takes good care of her boarders,—as long as their purses jingle at any rate.—By coorse you know Michael Hanrahan?”

“Certainly, certainly. I could not be at Miss Jenny’s hotel without knowing Michael—if you mean the waiter.”

“As for the matter of being waiter, Sir, I b’lieve poor Michael puts his hand to everything. He gives a help at the cooking, he tosses the beds with the girl, he polishes the knives an’ forks, he goes of arrands,—an’——”

“He dances.”

“Oh!—you may say that!—An’ well does he know how!”

"You seem to be well acquainted with my friend Michael?"

There was downright quiet humour in her laugh as she again bent her head aside, her dancing eyes peering at me as before.

"Ah!—why wouldn't I know poor Michael, when he belongs to me?—Don't you see—here's his cravat that I'll iron out for him most beautiful." And she held out a square of the whitest possible muslin.

"And them are Michael's," as she pointed to certain inner garments, "and them's his aprons that he wears afore him attending at the dinner."

"You are Michael's wife then?"

"His downright wedded wife I am, no less. To have an' to hould, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health,—'till death do us part. You see I don't forget one word of all I promised him. An' 'tis far from my intention to forget it, with Heaven's help!"

"Michael has been most fortunate in his choice of a wife, at all events."

"I'm not half good enough for him I can tell you."

"You seem much attached to him."

"That I am, the poor fellow—an' why wouldn't I? Michael would make a queen of me if he could, an' I take the will for the deed—that's my way."

"And an excellent way it is."

"I suppose, Sir, you didn't come to this time of your life without getting married?"

"I am a married man truly."

"An' by looking at you, Sir, I think you have a wife that takes care of you."

"No doubt of that either."

"Well, all I can tell you about it is this. If you had a cross-grained, cantankerous wife at home, I'd give you my advice to swim out in the say so far that you couldn't come back, sooner than go home to her again."

I spent nearly an hour very pleasantly in such badinage as this with Mary, the wife of Michael Hanrahan, the waiter at the little hotel where I boarded. Finally she informed me that she lived in

what I have named "the Town of the Cascades." That she had taken charge of a spa flowing from the cliff within a short distance of the Bornoch village, the water of which, as she averred, "would put iron moulds" on anything it touched. That her business at this spa was to fill tumblers of the water for such of the "Forneyaghs" as "thought it wholesome to have salt wather without an' rusty wather within." That I would find her at this spa every morning early, and every evening, "sitting undher a little cobbey-house" she had contrived in the cliffs, an' in which she would make room for me. And there, if I wished it, she would satisfy my curiosity as to the young wife for whose repose I had prayed.

"But," said I, "will not Michael be jealous if you and I sit so much together?"

"Don't you be one bit afeard of that, Sir dear. Michael would thrust me to sit with a younger—ay an' a comelier man than yourself—if it be not making too free to say so. But indeed Michael has no sort of fear on him for me—an' he needn't either."

And so, although I found in the hill-top church-yard no time-honoured relics such as I had reckoned on, yet the view of the peculiar scenery I have sketched,—the examination of the burial-ground,—but above all, the narrative I owe to Mary Hanrahan, repaid me for the clamber upwards.

I trust the perusal may recompense my readers for having borne me company thither.

CHAPTER IV.

BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.

If it be not known to every one, it ought to be, that it is unlucky to get married in May. But sooner than put the cup away from the lip, people will often run risks.

Now I would advise my young friends not to precipitate matters so as to make it a "needs must" to enter the marriage state in the month of May. Let them spend that month making their arrangements, and take the irrevocable pledge the month following. Let them not henceforward plead ignorance of the matter.

It was a beautiful day in May, when a chaise drove towards the bridge overlooking the cascades

I have described. There were white cockades, with ribbon-streamers flying therefrom, decorating the horses' heads. There were four horses, and, necessarily, two postilions,—and the postilions' hats bore white cockades also. Within the carriage sat the bride and bridegroom.

When ascending the bridge, the rapid pace of the horses was slackened at an intimation from the bridegroom: the face of the bride was seen at the window looking down the river, and the bridegroom's face was seen close to hers, and he was pointing in the direction of the water as he spoke, visibly engaged describing something. And the bride once or twice looked up and smiled in her bridegroom's face.

The inhabitants of six or seven small houses at the country-side of the bridge had all rushed out as the chaise drove up. The chaise and four was of itself sufficient to bring out the men and women and children, but the wedding favours in addition set them all on tiptoe.

It had been generally bruited that "Turney

O'Meara " had been married, or was to be married. As sure as the day this must be "Turney O'Meara;" and wasn't he bringing home his bride in style! Ha! never fear him!—he was the very fellow to make the most of it. This was the gist of the gazers' observations.

But the manner in which the inmates of the carriage were engaged fell particularly under the observation of a tall, robust man who was standing rigidly erect near the centre arch of the bridge. He had his own leg at one side of his body, and a substitute leg at the other; the back of his left hand rested against the peak of his gray beaver hat in the style of a military salute, and his blackthorn cudgel, point downwards, was extended from him to the full length of his right arm—in military salute also. The bridegroom happening to look down, recognized the accolade by lifting his hat and bowing, laughing the while. And the bride, smiling cordially, gracefully bent her head. Then the carriage, making quicker progress, drove on.

There was a great hubbub in the main street as

it progressed. Those living far up the road run fast down to have a view: those more fortunate, by whose doors the equipage passed, rushed out to the full extent of the footway, and very cordial salutations were given and returned.

Down by the little post-office the postilions cautiously guided their horses on to the carriage-road running along the river. A little beyond the cottage residence I have before described they went, —turned short to the right, and stopped at a small gate that opened into the flower-garden I have mentioned as immediately before the cottage windows. Here the bridegroom sprang lightly from the vehicle, and lifting out his bride, placed her beside him. He gave a few rapid directions to the postilions, who passed on with the carriage to the rear of the premises, while, arm-in-arm, the young couple went through the flowers and approached the cottage.

And here a few words descriptive of them will not be amiss.

The bridegroom was as fine a specimen of manly

beauty as you could see. He was tall, fully six feet in height ; his chest was ample ; there was an undulating taperness from his shoulders to the extremity of his limbs ; there was an elastic springiness in his movements, resulting from the perfection of his proportions, and set in motion by the buoyancy of his nature. There was an exuberant and even an ardent gaiety in his dark eye ; even at rest, there was a smile on his lips, ready to expand to merriment. But his dress was rather dashing than in good taste. In the way he wore his hat, a little to one side of his head, together with his genial air, and other characteristics, there was what would compel you to admit that you looked at a man brimful of animal spirits and of sanguine temperament.

The bride, with every look and movement, gave you the idea of gentle unobtrusiveness, of clinging dependence, of entire devotion to her husband. She was beautiful, too, but you forgot to examine the shape of her features, you were so engrossed by their loveliness of expression.

"And this is to be your home, my Ellen," said the bridegroom to his bride; "unworthy of you, but still our home, my own little wife."

"And a sweet, sweet home you have brought me to, Richard. We shall be so happy here, dear Richard!"

"Happy, indeed, my bird—gloriously happy—if I can make you so. I have been, up to this, a careless sort of fellow,—paying little regard to the interests of No. 1, as they call it; but now that one and one added together make but one still"—and the bridegroom drew his bride close to him—"I will become another man. I will change to be as sober and as steady as any big-wigged judge that ever sat upon the bench."

"Don't try to be over-serious, Richard; your smile I delight to see. It is my very sunshine. Ah! I should wither beneath your frown!"

"Frown!—my *frown*, Ellen!—why I hardly know how to frown, my beautiful bride: frowns are not natural to me, I believe. But were my eyebrows frozen together, one look from those beloved

eyes of yours, sweet Ellen, would thaw them asunder. No, no!—Not only will I not frown myself, but let me see who shall dare to cast a cloud over one of my Ellen's days with even a curl of the brow. Frown on you, my wife! Impossible! Impossible!"

"Then happy shall we be in this smiling little home of ours, dearest Richard."

"If we be not, there never were two beings happy since the world began. Ha! is that you, Teague? You are the first to greet us, my honest fellow."

These latter words were addressed by the bridegroom to a splendid mastiff who came bounding down the pathway towards him. Teague, having reached the object of his welcome, did not frisk about, and caper,—and whine, as a smaller and less dignified specimen of the canine race would have done,—but he elevated his head, looked with the most intense affection into his master's eyes, and sent forth from his expansive chest a modulated, rumbling, and most expressive bow-wow that no one could misinterpret. It meant "*cead mille faultha*" to you,

Richard O'Meara," as unmistakably as a dog could give a salutation utterance.

Teague was a noble dog, one of the true mastiff breed seldom seen now-a-days. His coat was of light tan-colour, streaked down the sides with dark brown ; his chest and paws were white ; his head, gear coloured like his sides. He was of large dimensions, and apparently of powerful strength. Teague never yelped,—I take the yelp to be a dog's laugh, or an expression of his peevishness, according to modulation. Teague was a silent dog ; but there was an eternal, good-natured smile in his eye as he met you, provided you and he were acquaintances. He was never surly ; serious, however, he certainly was. I have said that Teague was a silent dog, that is, a dog of few words. He did not waste his speech in clatter or gabble ; when he bayed at night to warn irregular characters from entering on his domain, a single deep bark at intervals he considered sufficiently significant.

Teague was not a prancing, curveting dog. His motions were deliberate, and there was a self-appre-

ciation in his mien, free, however, from what is styled dogmatism, that gave you to understand he regarded himself as an animal having heavy responsibilities on him, requiring deep thought and prudent deliberation. A stranger would at once understand the meaning of his look to be: "I have my eye on you; it is not my intention to do you an injury without good and substantial cause. I have studied human nature closely, and *you* are an object of study to me this moment. Do not imagine you can impose on me by appearances. If you have no bonâ fide business here, or if your motive for coming be an objectionable one, the sooner you move off the better. Take my word, I am not to be trifled with; you will have reason to regret it if I find it necessary to expel you by force from the premises I have in charge."

No stranger could doubt, as Teague walked round him and eyed him, that could the dog have spoken this would have been his address.

I must here acknowledge that I tread on dangerous ground in the introduction of even so respectable

a dog as Richard O'Meara's into this narrative. Some of the best "characters" drawn by the unrivalled Charles Dickens are his dogs. The tales wherein they act could not go on half so well without them. Their agencies are nearly indispensable, Their individualities, personal and mental, are brought out as distinctly from the canvas, and are as visible to the reader's eye as any other of the characters painted by that master's hand. I know well, therefore, that it is a dangerous experiment on my part to make my readers acquainted with Teague. It is a matter of necessity with me however. It will be seen in time that on a particular and important occasion Teague played a principal part.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDE AND TEAGUE ARE INTRODUCED TO EACH OTHER. THE WELCOME HOME.

"COME hither, my poor Teague, come hither," said the bridegroom to his dog. When he began to speak, Richard O'Meara's right arm was round his bride's waist, and his left hand clasped her right. Gently he pledged his confidence that she might pat the tawny sides of Teague. "Come, my poor Teague, come here and welcome your mistress home," the bridegroom repeated. Teague wagged his tail, not in jerks, but slowly and steadily, striking his sides with it as it vibrated with a wide sweep. And he looked smilingly into the speaker's face, anxious to understand the meaning of the words addressed to him.

"This is your mistress, Teague, your beautiful mistress. Your allegiance must henceforward be divided, and your responsibilities doubled. You must be a loving, dutiful dog to your young mistress, Teague. You must help your master to be careful of her, my old dog."

Did the dog comprehend the address? I will not undertake to answer yea or nay to this query.

But Teague's acts seemed to imply that he did. First he proceeded to ascertain his mistress's identity by scent. This point being settled to his satisfaction, he discovered her hand where it rested by her side. And the hand being ungloved, Teague ventured to pass his tongue over it, in the gentlest manner. She did not withdraw it; the liliest, silkiest hand would not be hurt or soiled by the contact. Then Teague caressed the soft hand with his head; then he rubbed himself tenderly to her dress. And he looked up at her, as a knight might look at his lady when passing the gallery of beauty at a tourney. Then moving twice or thrice round the bride and bridegroom as they stood, Teague

took his position a few paces in advance of them. Having looked round to ascertain their will, he discarded all strong expressions of feeling from his face, assumed a pleased, business-like expression of countenance, and walked leisurely along towards the door of the cottage, glancing over his shoulder now and again as he progressed, as much as to say, "I think this is the road, but it is well to be certain."

"You will find in honest Teague, Ellen, the most intelligent, the fondest, and, next to myself, the most devoted of servitors. You will become attached to him, as he will be to you, from this moment."

"‘Love me, love my dog,’ dear Richard, shall be the groundwork of our intimacy. Yes, Teague and I will be fast friends. I dare promise for both."

Teague was not the only one to welcome Richard O'Meara and his bride. Within the leaf-covered porch, projecting beyond the entrance door, stood a young man and a young girl—a very young girl indeed. The young man might be about twenty, and was not above middle height. His was a pale

flabby face, that looked even paler than need be when taken in contrast with his large, jet black whiskers, and jet black hair, which hair was divided in the middle and combed back over his ears. So far as the mouth could give indication of character—and is it not the most expressive feature? he had, according to the Irish definition, “an open countenance;” for the mouth was very wide indeed. You would be puzzled to say whether it was simplicity or caniness that stared at you from his large grey eyes. There was a mixture of both these opposite qualities, taking the expression of mouth and eyes together. And there was good-humour and good-nature not easily ruffled. So that although you should feel puzzled, as I have said, you felt inclined to become better acquainted with the owner of the pale round face and staring eyes and full, expansive mouth. He was dressed smartly : his waistcoat was as yellow as saffron ; his blue body-coat was decorated with two rows of very shining gilt buttons ; and from his hips down his person was covered with a snow-white apron.

The girl standing by the young man's side was low, and plump, and tidy. Her attire was neatness itself from top to toe, but you overlooked her personal decorations to note the shiny waviness of her auburn hair, the pleasant twinkling of her hazel eyes, the bloom of her peachy and peach-shaped cheeks, the dimples that played incessantly round her red lips ; for however varied the smile might be, according to the temper of her mind, the lips were never without a smile, either of condolence, of affection, of merriment, or of good-nature.

Such were Michael Hanrahan and Mary Malone in the days of their courtship. The same Michael Hanrahan this was that I knew subsequently as waiter and so forth at the little Bornoeh hotel. And the same Mary it was whom I met in the hill-top churchyard, and from whose still smiling lips I gained the incidents of this narrative, whilst seated with her in her "cobbey house" in the cliff above the Bornoeh bay.

Teague having preceded his master and his mistress, as he now understood the new comer to be,

and having ascertained that all was right so far, set him down on the sanded patch outside the cottage door. He took his place at seemly dog's distance, a privileged and interested looker-on at further proceedings. And he eyed all movements attentively, as one who felt himself bound to enter every particular in his note-book, to be pondered over at leisure, as a reference by which to regulate future actions. His tail, which projected behind, described a semicircle in the sand, the motion ceasing now and again as some occurrence took place requiring thought, and then vibrating to and fro anew as his mind became enlightened.

Michael Hanrahan stood, as I have said, on the threshold of the cottage door, with Mary Malone beside him. When the bride and bridegroom came in sight, Michael's body, bending at the hips, swayed up and down, and his arms accompanied the motion of his body, this bending and rising being meant for a repetition of bows, and the accompanying movement of the arms significant of the most heartfelt welcome.

"Welcome, welcome! A thousand welcomes home to our young couple," he cried. "Welcome, again and again, to the master and mistress of the house."

Here Michael's forehead nearly touched his toes in the energy of his greeting. He so remained doubled for a purpose. He twisted his flexible and redundant lips altogether on one side, and addressed the curtsying and smiling Mary through an acoustic instrument thus formed:

"She's a posy, Mary,—a posy, God bless her!"

Another uprise, and another lengthened bend.

"Welcome, welcome home!—Mary—a posy she is surely!"

The movement repeated. Another loud "Welcome!" and another aside—

"A rose, Mary,—a lily, Mary,—a posy of posies, Mary!"

Aloud again:

"Wouldn't doubt you, Masther Dick, but you'd pluck a rosebud!"

"My good Michael," said the laughing 'Masther

Dick,' "there's a contradiction in all this. You are, to all appearance, giving us a hearty welcome, but you won't allow us to cross the threshold. Don't you see how you and Mary fill up the doorway?"

"Well, well, may I never!—Isn't that a prime joke, sure?—Mary, lave the way, and let in the young couple!" And pulling Mary with him, Michael retreated within the hall.

"Faith I'd open the door of my heart t'ye, not to talk of the door of the house. You're welcome, Ma'am, mighty welcome to us. Walk this way, Ma'am, this is our parlour." And Michael opened a door at the right-hand side of the hall. "This is our parlour, Ma'am, and welcome you are to it. May you be happy; may you be joyful; and may sorrow never put foot over the threshold you cross."

"My Ellen, this is Michael Hanrahan," said the bridegroom. "He and I are foster-brothers. My friend Michael wishes to be known as one who often says foolish things, but Michael is not a fool. He is an honest, good fellow, and when his foster-

brother takes Michael's advice, he doesn't go wrong."

The bride looked pleasantly at Michael, and he basked in the sunniness of her gentle smile. She gently took his hand.

"We shall be good friends, I think, Michael and I," she said kindly.

"May heaven's angels be round you and with you," answered Michael, as he ushered the way into "their parlour." And the door closed on the bride and bridegroom.

CHAPTER VI.

NORA.

MICHAEL HANRAHAN looked across the hall at Mary.

“Mary, isn’t she a posy?”

“Indeed an’ sure she is, Michael, as beautiful a young creature as ever my eyes rested on.”

“Well, Masther Dick, if you haven’t the luck, never mind it. And now, with heaven’s help, happy times are in store for us.” Michael paused, grimaced at Mary, and took a sudden and rather singular way of manifesting his glee. In a boyish, but not unmusical voice, he began singing the air of “Haste to the wedding,” thus :—

“Bow-wow-diddle-dee-iddy
Bow-wa-diddle dee-dee-dee—”

and so on. And he danced with great agility about the hall, exhibiting his most complex steps—the “diddle-dee-dee-dee” executed with an intricacy puzzling to follow with the eye.

“Sure there isn’t such a dancer as Michael in the County Clare,” said Mary to me, when she had reached this part of her narrative.

“You and I agree on that point, Mary. The other night he seized on a wandering piper, and brought him into the kitchen of the hotel. And he danced half through the night, until he was footsore. He was only able to hobble about next day.”

“Ha, ha, ha! The poor fellow! When his heart is glad he dances for the gladness’ sake. An’ what’s curious in him, poor boy, I’ve seen him dancing away his sorrow. Ay, indeed, Sir! But in good deed, if you were looking at him that day in the hall, the very heart in your buzzum would jump with pleasure to see him. Ah, ha! How do you think he finished off his ‘Haste to the wedding,’ Sir?”

"Why, with some pattern step, I suppose, such as I have seen him myself perform."

"There's no doubt but he done the 'legs across' in a way you'd like to see, Sir. You'd think he was on wires, he was so supple. But, ha ha! he went farther than that. I couldn't help moving my head this way from shouldher to shouldher; no more could I help moving my hands this way at both sides of me, keeping time to the tune. Well, my honest Michael dances round, until he comes close to me, and then he does the step in real style, an' then,—when I wasn't thinking of the like no more than I am thinking of the like now,—he had me round the neck with both his arms, and before I could blink my eye, the rogue—kissed me. Well, well!"

"Ah!—of course you were very angry, Mary?"

"Why, Sir, I pertended to be in a rage. But I wasn't—an' the rogue knew I wasn't. Somehow, I never could feel angry with Michael, poor fellow,—an' you couldn't look cross when you wern't cross, you know, Sir."

"You are not often cross, Mary, I am sure."

“Well, Sir, I don’t know that; I suppose I was often contrhary enough. But never with Michael,” she added; “’twould be a pity to vex you, Michael, for you never vexed me!”

“Teague, good dog, did you ever see her equal since the day you were pupped?”

This was Michael’s question to the mastiff when he had coaxed the ill-humour out of Mary that was not in her at all. Teague had looked on at the dance of “Haste to the wedding” with manifest approval. Once or twice even, he stood up, and seemed inclined to take part in the capering. But that, on reflection, he considered this out of character for a steady dog like himself. As Michael put the above query to Teague, he rested both hands on his knees, and placed his own nose in contact with Teague’s. The dog’s eyes laughed, and opening his jaws he murmured a pleased assent to the interrogatory.

“Ah! didn’t I guess your thoughts, Teague?”

We have a mistress that's worth guarding; and if the world was turned topsy-turvy, you and I will stand by our posy to the last gasp." And he patted the dog's side lustily.

When Michael turned again into the hall, after he had exchanged opinions with Teague, his exuberance of glee appeared to quit him.

Partly filling up a passage leading to the inferior portion of the cottage, was a young woman. She stood there with her arms folded hard across her chest, and otherwise in a rigid, unfeminine attitude. She had been there, so standing, when the bridegroom and bride had entered; but in Michael's exuberance of delight he had not noticed her. She now attracted his observation.

"Nora, you look as black as the thunder-cloud," he said, reprovably. "There is no welcome for our bride in your face, Nora."

"Every one isn't to be a play-boy like to Michaelen Hanrahan," the girl answered, in a surly tone.

The half Merry-Andrew expression of Michael's face left it altogether. He became serious at once.

And with his seriousness an intellectuality you would not have expected as belonging to his character was in his eye and about his mouth. He approached close to the scowling girl, and spoke with quiet seriousness to her, while he held up his forefinger and shook it at her.

"I understand you, Nora," he said. "Be on your guard. I'll keep my eye on you, depend upon it."

"Faugh! you capering brat!" cried the girl, violently, while her black brow beetled over her eye of jet, and her finely-formed lips were distorted with anger and disdain.

"Keep your eyes on your own affairs, Michaleen Hanrahan, or I'll thrust them out with this finger, an' make a blind man of you."

She pushed the finger suddenly forward, and Michael retreated a step or two.

"Nora, you have no business to be undher this roof longer, and you must leave it."

"Michaleen Hanrahan! my right to be here is beyond your right. And let me see the one to

remove me from it. Michaleen Hanrahan! you gave me a warning. Take another warning from me. If you meddle or make with *me*, 't isn't that grinning *ownshuch* beyond you'll have to deal with."

So saying, Nora turned and was gone.

Michael's face could not lose colour under any circumstances, as it had no colour to lose. Therefore it was not unusually pale when he turned to Mary. But his lips, which were generally of a deep red, were blanched and bloodless. He took Mary by the arm, and the right forefinger which he had shaken at Nora he now raised at Mary.

"Remember, I tell you, Mary! There is sin and mischief brewing in Nora Spruhan's dark mind."

"Ah! then, Michael, you'll find there isn't. She's vexed a little because she couldn't lave the kitchen to put on her good clothes, an' to meet the mather an' misthress. She'll come round, Michael. Don't look so frightened, my poor boy."

Mary smiled her affectionate, soothing smile as she spoke.

"Mischief there is in her, Mary. Not the young girl's mischief that teaches them to put the heart across in the boys. That kind of mischief comes by nature to them,—that mischief they get as a gift,—that they will use, and that they may!—as long as the world is a world. 'Tisn't *that* sort of mischief that is in Nora Spruhan. 'Tis the mischief that comes of sin. *That* you know nothing about, Mary, *acuishla*, and with God's help you will never know anything about it. And that you may never have thoughts the like of Nora Spruhan's thoughts, is the wish of my heart for you, Mary!"

Mary here paused in her recital.

"Wouldn't any one be fond of Michael, Sir?" she asked me. "He was so pleasant, an', above all, he was so good!"

"I must say, Mary, that your affections were well placed."

"Indeed an' in thruth they were!" assented Mary fervently.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BONFIRE.

“ONCE more, welcome to your future home, my Ellen,” said Richard O’Meara to his bride, as he closed the door of the room into which Michael Hanrahan had ushered them. “Come, look as if you were at home indeed. This bonnet must no longer screen *my* locks of burnished gold, nor shall this big shawl disguise my Ellen’s form. Now, sunbeam of my cottage and of my heart, welcome, welcome.”

And Richard O’Meara tenderly embraced his wife. And he felt the gentle pressure of her arms around his neck, which, gentle though it was, was yet more felt than if a cable’s utmost strain had bound him.

"Now I must reconcile the bird I have captured to the prison provided for her. But our journey has been long, and perhaps has wearied you, Ellen?"

"Not a bit, Richard, not one bit. And have I not a stout arm to cling to were the expedition even long and toilsome."

Ellen was placing her arm within her husband's as she spoke, looking, as she felt, all sunny happiness.

"That will never do, Ellen; the side where my heart beats, if you please,—unless it be your wish it should shift from left to right to be near you."

Ellen tripped round, and, passing her arm through that offered her, she clasped the slender fingers of both hands together, and leaned with all her might thereon, so intimating her sense of confidence in the stability of her support, looking up into her husband's face as a young and happy bride alone can look.

And thus they went through the cottage from room to room; the bridegroom affecting to depre-

ciate the really elegant little home he had provided for his gentle wife, Ellen murmuring her approval of everything she saw. And she spoke her real thoughts, for all was *couleur de rose* around her.

I will not dog the footsteps of the young couple as they take their domestic tour. Newly-married people do not, for some time following their bridal, feel desirous of the presence of strangers. It is known to all that there is a honey-moon to succeed the marriage-vow, a honey-moon that shines for two persons only, and whose soft beams are but interrupted by the presence of others. Those who have enjoyed the lustre of this planet need no description of the peculiar radiance shed by it. Others, who have not, will best appreciate the mellow influence of the light when, after due preliminary, they change their state of singleness. This I can say to all, that no honey-moon shines on the unwedded.

Michael Hanrahan, according to Mary's judgment of whom, "any one would be fond of," did not exercise the same delicacy. No matter which

way the bride and bridegroom turned, there was Michael Hanrahan's pale, round, flabby face. He was there ostensibly as an exhibitor, and to open doors and so forth; but he was there in reality to gratify himself by looking at the "posy," which title he had adopted as an expressive one. While he ran here and there to intercept "the progress" or "the dominions," he nudged and pulled Mary. "Run, Mary, your sowl!" he would say, "run and we'll have another peep at the posy." And so Mary would scamper after Michael, and by that means she was often at his side, curtsying and smiling, as Mary only knew how to smile.

That no part of the geography of the new abode might be unnoted by the bride, Michael led the way to the kitchen, where he pointed out the various delicacies in preparation for the first repast she was to grace as mistress of the house. Here Nora Spruhan was at work.

Nora's welcome to her young mistress was affectedly lowly and obsequious. But the gentle Ellen shrank before the intense scowl of Nora's

lustrous dark eyes. And this expression of hatred was changed to deriding scorn as she glanced at the gentleman-usher, while he threatened her with his fist behind backs.

Night was covering with her sable pall the flowers and foliage outside the cottage windows. The birds had done singing, and had established themselves under their respective leafy canopies. The honey-moon alone shone into the pretty drawing-room, where bride and bridegroom, seated together on a sofa, murmured to each other in the tone with which the dove accosts its mate. All at once, a flash of ruddy light, bursting through the windows, paled the beams of the gently-shining honey-moon. The bride clung to the bridegroom, and the bridegroom himself was not wholly unalarmed. Almost simultaneously with the illumination of the room, there arose a loud shout of human voices. Then there was a discharge of ordnance, then a more vociferous shout. After a while there was a second discharge, followed by more shouting. And this went on for some time.

"As I live," said the bridegroom, after listening awhile to the clamour, "they have got up a bonfire on the road to celebrate our arrival."

And he was right in his surmise. A bonfire there was on the road beyond the cottage, and in this wise had it been provided. The whole display was owing to Michael Hanrahan's exertions.

From the rear of the premises he had brought a quantity of straw and firewood; on these he had piled peat soda, or turf, as the Irish term is. At first one or two youngsters had looked on at his proceedings; these he enlisted as his assistants. By degrees there were many urchins aiding Michael; the numbers went on increasing, and detachments were sent out to scour through "The Town of the Cascades," and seize on any combustibles they could lay hands on. So that in a very short time there was a pyramid of very creditable height and bulk. By the time this pile was ready for ignition, a crowd of old and young, of both sexes, had assembled. The brand could not be applied while the sun was looking on, and his departure was impa-

tiently waited for. Ignition did not immediately take place, but as soon as the fire flamed up, up rose with it the celebrating shout of those assembled. Thus are the red glare of light and the huzzaing that startled the bride and bridegroom satisfactorily accounted for.

The discharge of ordnance is next to be explained. If any one curious about the matter will accompany me to the carriage road running parallel with the river, he will there see a circle of demon-like beings,—demon-like, because half their bodies to all appearance are red hot,—who, with joined hands, are capering as demons might be supposed to caper about the fire. The fire is so splendid in its way, that it colours trees and rocks and all other objects a glowing red, and the falling water of the cascades is like molten lead as it tumbles. And the demon who jumps highest of all the capering circle is Michael Hanrahan, his face no longer pale, but positively ignited whenever you catch a glimpse of it.

Within the rampant circle of demons, his person thoroughly illuminated, you see a stout-bodied man

seated. You can note his face quite distinctly. You think him a grim-looking fellow ; he does not seem to share in the excitement and half-crazy mirth going on around him. For his brows are knit hard over his eyes, and his bony jaws look as if they were locked together. He has two chairs in requisition ; on one of them he is seated, the other is placed in front of him, and on it rests an object that arouses your curiosity. It is not a leg, certainly, that you see, though it appears to issue from that part of the body whence a leg should protrude. And see !—there are four,—ay, six,—active little fellows bustling about this puzzling object ;—look now !—a tiny, but brilliant jet of sparks rises straight up, and before you have time to judge what this may portend, there issues from the extremity of whatever it may be that rests on the second chair, a hasty and angry flame. And simultaneously, a deafening detonation is heard ; the six little fellows, who for the moment have been passive, toss themselves about like mad imps, the prancers rush round with increased velocity, and the welkin rings with the

huzza of the assembled crowd, big and little as they are.

Taking the data I have given, I will for the present leave the friend who has accompanied me to this scene, to speculate upon the mysterious piece of ordnance I have so far described, engaging, however, to make all clear in due course.

There never was a bonfire in Ireland, the magic radiance of which did not exercise an attractive power on some professor of music to draw him within its playground—the blaze. The little “Town of the Cascades” was not without its resident performer, and in due time “Donnegan the Piper” emerged from a lane off the main street, and made his appearance at Michael Hanrahan’s conflagration. And with real cordiality was “Donnegan the Piper” welcomed. The mysterious piece of ordnance had disappeared from the chair it had rested on to make place for the musician. The piper was blind, but he had no lack of eager assistants and servitors. Michael Hanrahan himself enthroned Donnegan the Piper in the immediate neighbourhood of the man with the

grim jaws and knitted brows. And as soon as Donnegan the Piper had screwed his instrument together, and prepared it for the performance of its office, away went his elbow, and away pranced the dancers, and jigs and reels became the order of the night.

And now Michael Hanrahan was in his element, and the intricacy of his steps, and the accuracy with which he marked every bar of the music against the road with his feet, and the airiness of his bound, and the humour of his flings as he changed places with his partner, drew forth universal plaudits. And Michael "danced to" Mary Malone first, you may be sure; and then he "danced to" many others. And then, while giving place to "fresh boys," and wiping his teeming face, the thought struck him to appoint a deputation, and invite the bride and bridegroom to the sport.

Capering all the way from the bonfire to the cottage, he soon appeared before the young couple, and putting on his most foolish grin, and bowing, and panting, and speaking in catches of breath, he communicated the unanimous request of the neighbours,

“that Masther Richard and the darlin’ new mis-thress would come and have a look at the fun that was going on.” Michael might well call this a “unanimous invitation,” inasmuch as not having asked any one’s consent but his own, no one could disagree with him.

The bride consulted the bridegroom’s face, and the bridegroom being one who had never yet cried “stop!” whenever mirth was to be found, gallantly provided the bride’s bonnet and shawl, and led her forth to the scene of impromptu festivity.

On their way they were preceded, first by Michael Hanrahan, bearing two chairs on his head ; then by the dog Teague. Teague’s ears were watchfully erect, and his eyes glared with astonishment in the direction of the unaccountable noise and light. Twice he paused and looked back to ascertain how those he had in keeping were thereby affected, or if they wished him to gallop on and put an end to the riotous assembly. Perceiving in them no symptoms of alarm or displeasure, he became reassured, and trotted on, wondering, to be sure, and curious, but not feeling called on to interfere.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DANCE.

MICHAEL re-entered the crowd crying out to "make way." If there could be any doubt as to the unanimity of the invitation conveyed by the deputation, Michael Hanrahan, the acclaim with which the visitors were received would have dispelled it. In answer to the cheers of welcome, the bridegroom waved his hat round his head, while the bride gracefully bowed her acknowledgments. Very quickly they were installed on the chairs brought by the deputation, the bridegroom's seat being next to that of the man with the grim jaws and staring eyes; that of the bride beside the bridegroom. Before sitting down, Richard O'Meara cordially shook hands with

his neighbour. "Colonel," he said, "I am delighted to meet you so stout and well. I had the pleasure of seeing you on the bridge to-day as I came home, and thank you for the 'present arms' you gave me."

"Was there—saw you.—Joy, boy—joy, boy!"

The answer was given in four snaps of the apparently locked jaws, which opened and closed abruptly with each separate snap. There was no cheeriness in the salutation, nor did the knitting of the brows relax, or the sternness of the eyes abate. The shake of the hand was cordially returned, however.

"Let me introduce the 'Colonel' to you, Ellen," said the bridegroom to the bride.

The "Colonel" was erect in an instant, as erect as was ever colonel in front of his regiment. And as he so stood, it became clear that the ordnance from which the repeated salvos had proceeded really formed the support of his body at the right side. The "Colonel" looked with such intensity into the soft blue eyes of the timorous bride, that she

wincing beneath his stare. With the left hand he raised his gray beaver hat to the full extent of his upraised arm, and with a twirl of his wrist brought his cudgel to a salute. In this position he continued without speaking until Ellen and her husband sat down. Then, replacing his hat slowly, he sat down also.

There had been a short cessation of the dancing on the arrival of the new comers. The pastime was again set going by Michael Hanrahan, who tripped up in front of the bride's chair, bowing until his forehead nearly touched his toes, and scraping his leg backward and kicking it up behind him, addressed to her the usual request :—

“Dance to you, if you plaze, Ma'am !”

Ellen looked at her husband, and he smiled and nodded. So Michael, to his proud delight, led her forth with great gallantry. But gallantry is not the term to use. To be sure, he expanded his mouth in the direction of his ears, to a most marvellous extent. The smile, however, expressed by the expansion was not one of unmistakable jollity, such

as he would have put on with another partner ; this was a smile of gratified pleasure, but it was humble, deferential pleasure. He had donned his white, wedding gloves for the occasion, and he did not grasp the bride's hand in his as he would have grasped Mary's, but just held the tips of her gloved fingers resting on his. And he squared his elbow to such an acute angle that, in Mary's words, "'twas so sharp that he could push the eye out of one with it." And in this fashion Michael led his fair partner towards the musician.

"What tune will you please to have, Ma'am?" he asked. The bride declined to choose, so Michael very happily ordered "Haste to the wedding," for his inspiration.

"Well, well," said Mary, "'twould be a day's journey well-travelled only to come and look at him. He danced the same 'Haste to the wedding' by himself in the hall most beautiful when he had no music but his own little *dhass*. But now, when Donnegan the Piper was there to lift it for him—

an' Donnegan isn't to be bet at the pipes—he went beyond the beyonds entirely !”

“And how did the bride dance, Mary?”

“Well—I'd say only middling to plaze my taste. She sailed about mighty handsome to be sure, soft an' aisy. Somehow, Sir, she put me in mind of a swallow, that doesn't clap the wing much, but that darts hither an' thither, an' turns which way it likes without any throuble to itself. But sure she hadn't the steps like Michael, an' you couldn't hear her footfall no more than if she was a sperrit.”

None other but Michael asked the bride to dance. Michael, when consulted on the point, as master of the ceremonies, “and the masther's own fosther-brother,” put an extinguisher on such freedom. There was no one there fit to dance with her but himself, except “the Curnel,” and “the Curnel” was neither inclined to dance, nor could he, owing to his peculiarity of limb, were he ever so well inclined thereto.

The bridegroom danced, and danced frequently.

He entered into the spirit of the scene, buoyantly, as was his nature. His bride looked on with delight as his splendid figure flitted before her. Passing where she sat he more than once saluted her by gaily taking off his hat, and then her acknowledgment was joyous.

Nora Spruhan, the girl against whom Michael Hanrahan's threatening forefinger had been held up in the cottage hall, was present. A great metamorphose had taken place in Nora's appearance. She was showily, but, for her, becomingly attired, and there was about her a bold consciousness of beauty, a forwardness and self-possession of manner. No one could help admitting that her eyes of sparkling jet, her wavy raven hair, her rounded cheeks and rounded chin, her full and flexible lips, the roundness of her form, and the ease of her movements, gave her no slight claims to be called beautiful. But there was an effrontery—a self-assertion in her face and carriage, that rendered this beauty of person rather to be feared than loved.

But the bridegroom danced with Nora. As he did so there was a whisper and a murmur amongst the lookers-on, of which both became conscious, though on each its effect was different. When, very shortly, Richard O'Meara made his affectedly rustic bow, and would have retired, the girl refused to relinquish her partner; she kept him by the hand and whirled round him, until Michael Hanrahan, availing himself of the rustic custom, jumped forward to the rescue. Then Nora, flung disdainfully away from the fresh vis-à-vis, and dashed through the crowd into the cottage.

The bridegroom procured liquor for the assemblage at the bonfire, and it went round copiously. Not one of those present gulped down the beverage so provided with better will than the man yclept the "Colonel." His salutations to the young couple were frequent as his libations went on. By-and-by he was joined by two others of better grade than the general throng, and these three drank away right heartily.

The bride and bridegroom retired betimes amid the thorough good wishes of the assemblage at the bonfire.

And so ended the day of "the hauling-home" at the Cottage near the Cascades.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERIOUS RESIDENT OF "THE TOWN OF THE
CASCADES."

EARLY in this narrative, while looking up the river from the bridge, I directed^{*} attention to half a dozen or so of small "shabby-genteel" houses rising above the right bank of the river.

In three of these, the three nearest the bridge, dwelt three great cronies. In that immediately at hand lived the man from whose right limb, as it so far appears, proceeded the cannonading at the bonfire.

This strange person was not a native of "The Town of the Cascades," and the fixing of his abode there appeared to have been purely accidental. On an evening, three years prior to the

period of my narrative, he had arrived from the county-town as one of the passengers wedged together on the public car.

Every one who has journeyed on an Irish "public car" knows that from starting to pulling-up, the travellers are right good neighbours for the while; that the closer they are packed, the better neighbours they become, and that loud talk, loud laughter, mirth, and good fellowship make up the rule of the road. This being the case it was remarked as singular and unaccountable that the man I am now writing of did not once open his lips during the journey of more than twenty miles, except when he opened them to swallow liquor wherever it could be obtained.

When the car stopped at the "office" in the main street, the passengers, except the silent one, jumped down to scramble for their luggage, and depart for their several destinations. And when all had gone off, there he remained, still, without speaking. Exclusive of the beggars, who are numerous, and who have been often described by tourists,

there is always a knot of inquiring people assembled to scrutinize the arrivals on the public car, and sarcastic enough their remarks often are ; generally, there is a policeman too, to look on quietly, and see that all is as it should be.

The scrutineers on the present occasion were deeply interested to discover why this silent man remained in his seat, without any apparent intention of moving. And the policeman considered he was bound to step forward and make inquisition. To the inquiries thereupon addressed to the silent man, no answer was returned, but he stared at the questioner with a stern and stupefied gaze. It was ascertained, however, that the object of curiosity had a wooden leg,—that he was very drunk,—but that though helpless from inebriation, his right arm was firmly twined round a good-sized portmanteau immediately behind him.

It would have been the manifest duty of the policeman to have taken this silent, staring man into his keeping. There could be no doubt that he was “a case.” Drunken men are called “cases,”

but the exact analysis of the term I am not able to give. "Cases" of liquor, metaphorically considered, they may perhaps be.

It was evident to the lookers-on that if any amongst them were found as "far gone" as the man sitting on this car, such would be regarded as a "case" by the policeman, and dealt with accordingly. But, owing perhaps to a brotherly feeling, the majority having been "cases" themselves whenever practicable, the policeman's present conception of his duty was greatly approved of, and he received cordial aid in removing the silent, tipsy, wooden-legged man into the house of a certain "widow-woman" near at hand who kept accommodation for lodgers. The heavy portmanteau, a military cloak, and a stout blackthorn cudgel found clutched in his right hand, were accordingly all brought in and given in charge to the "widow-woman," together with the owner of these articles.

Such was the first appearance in "The Town of the Cascades" of the man now resident in the nearest of the shabby-genteel houses above the bridge.

After removing his wooden leg, which was expertly unstrapped by the policeman, the man was placed in bed, precautions being taken by the same official to seal up his portmanteau so that the contents could not be meddled with.

The next morning the silent man was delirious ; and so he continued for more than a week. It was remarkable that nearly all his colloquies with the fanciful personages about his bed were carried on by signs, and that for ten days the only words he uttered were these,—“Ready, present, fire!”—enough to prove these three words were, that although chary of his speech he was not dumb. The doctor who attended him asserted that his illness was the result of intemperate habits, and I suppose the doctor was right.

After a lapse of ten days the patient's intellect returned. He beckoned the “widow-woman” who had been his nurse over to his bedside ; he grasped her hand.

“Thanks—good—madam !” he said —“Honour and soul—not forget it—never !”

He rapidly recovered. When able to rise, the key of the iron-bound portmanteau was forthcoming : where it had previously been no one could tell. From the portmanteau he drew forth money, and paid freely and liberally all claims on him.

Whatever may have been his influencing motive, the silent man now fixed himself permanently in "The Town of the Cascades."

From the evening that the silent man had been consigned from the public car to the "widow-woman's" care, he had been an object of the most absorbing speculations to, I may safely say, every resident in my "Town of the Cascades."

"Who is he?"—"What is he?"—"What is his name?"—"Where did he come from?"—"What brought him here?" were questions in every one's mouth ; questions with which neighbour plied neighbour, and questions that no neighbour could satisfactorily answer. There were surmises and suspicions innumerable, but nothing that could be relied on as conclusive.

The first day the silent man appeared in the

main street, he was closely and accurately examined from head to foot, to enable the observers to come to something like an accurate decision about him. It would seem that he was a tall man, and a robust man, with broad chest and shoulders; that at the right side of his body there was a wooden leg:—that in his right hand he carried a stout cudgel:—that as he went along he punched his wooden leg down in a resolute manner:—that at his left side was his own original left leg, and that this was of brawny proportion, and that he flung it before him with a sturdy step, and as if marching in military style.

It was further remarked that he held his head loftily, his broad chin pointing upwards. Also, physiognomists observed, that his teeth appeared to be riveted together, and that he stared hard at everything and everybody, from beneath heavy brows that nearly met together above his hooked nose.

Nor did his attire pass unnoticed. It was indubitably a blue military frock-coat that he wore,

buttoned up to his throat. No one but a military man could endure his black silk stock pulled so tight beneath his chin. And his blue trousers, with the red stripe down the outside seam, were military trousers, beyond a question. Indeed the only portion of dress about him *not* military was the high-crowned, broad-leafed, drab-coloured beaver hat that rose above his head. But even this could not neutralize the general air and costume of the man.

CHAPTER X.

THE "COLONEL'S" GRADE IS DETERMINED. THE
THREE NEIGHBOURS.

NICK MAHAFFY, the draper and silk-mercier and so forth, who as the stranger passed had stood at his door with his thumbs inserted into the armholes of his waistcoat, straddled halfway across the street to meet his opposite neighbour, Pat Dreelan, the grocer and spirit-dealer; and five or six others of less note, as "birds of a feather," joined these two.

He's an officer on the half-pay list,—you may depend upon it," gurgled out Nick Mahaffy. And he turned his bullet-head round, his chin revolving within his capacious cravat, and his prominent blue eyes rolling from face to face. . Nick Mahaffy regarded himself as the principal man of the town,

and as such, he expected that "all he said should be gospel."

"To all appearance what you say is very likely, Mr. Mahaffy," modestly assented Pat Dreelan.

"I'm sure of it. I say it, and am sure of it."

Nick Mahaffy became dogmatical, and his face was flushed, as he challenged contradiction by frowning at each of the bystanders separately.

There was an acquiescing nod, or nod and shrewd wink, from all save Toby Purcell, the keeper of the "McMahon Arms" hotel. Toby was not a point-blank dissentient, but he had a jesting remark to make on all occasions.

"He's not an officer out and out at any rate," observed Toby, "for there is some of him wanting. He forgot his right leg behind him somewhere."

"I say he *is* an officer on the half-pay list," reiterated Nick Mahaffy in a passionate tone, his anger roused when he found his "gospel" questioned even in jest.

Luckily, at this instant, the person commented on, who had paused for a moment, gazing in the

direction of the church, which as I have said terminated the main street, wheeled suddenly and rapidly round. The knot of observers dispersed at once, with the exception of Nick Mahaffy, who recrossed the street slowly, his thumbs still in his waistcoat holes, neither his dignity or corpulence allowing of hasty movements.

It was not altogether on the dictum of Nick Mahaffy that a conclusion was arrived at. The general judgment led to the adoption of his opinion, namely, that the "silent man" was a half-pay officer.

Consultations were subsequently held to decide on his grade. At first the opinions were various. One thought he must be a captain, another would dub him major.

"By Jericho," said Toby Purcell, "you may as well for the honour and credit of the town, make him a general at once. 'Twon't cost you a halfpenny more."

Here again Nick Mahaffy came in with his dictum.

"I say it, and I'm sure of it, that he's a Curnel."

So a colonel's rank was awarded to the new-comer. He never on any occasion when so addressed repudiated the title, and it became his thenceforward.

There was a difference, however, in speaking to and speaking of this mysterious settler. There was some doubt as to the colonelcy; there was none as to the fact of his being on the half-pay list. So it came about that he was familiarly spoken of as "the Half-pay." And the Half-pay I shall in future term him.

Two very material questions were yet to be decided: "Where did he come from?" and "What was his name?"

He could not be traced one inch further than the county-town somewhat beyond twenty miles distant. He did not belong to the county-town, however. There was no doubt as to his country. He was not English or Scotch; he was not a "northern;" but there was no clue to guide inquiry as to which of the other three provinces of Ireland he had migrated

from. Then, as to his name. This proved a mystery too. He had not told his name to any one. The "widow-woman" could not give information. There was no address or label on his iron-bound portmanteau, nor had he left behind him on any occasion one line to enlighten people on this point. The widow-woman had asked his name. She imagined he was vexed with her for so questioning him, and he was too generous to be vexed by her. But in answer to her inquiry he had snapped open his jaws twice to say, "P. ! W. !"

Now this intelligence was no way satisfactory. "P. W." could not be the Colonel's name. Toby Purcell's translations of "Paddy Whelan," or "Perry Winkle," or "Peery Walsh," were deemed more witty than wise.

But the stranger received letters at the post-office ? Yes, he received one letter each quarter on a certain day. These letters, however, were addressed to "P. W." So the inquirers remained as much in the dark as ever. And our friend continued to be known by no other name, "*faute de meilleur*,"

than that of the Half-pay, or, in addressing him, that of Colonel.

The Half-pay, then, lived in the little "shabby-genteel" house on the right of the river, looking up from the bridge; and in that one nearest the bridge.

The next door neighbour to the Half-pay was Ned Culkin, the gauger of the district. Ned Culkin, as my friend Mary described him, was "a small round, lump of a man," who up to a certain hour every day, winter and summer, complained that "there was a shivering of cowl'd over him," and who, while this "shivering of cowl'd" lasted, was a blear-eyed, bilious-looking, tottering little creature. But when his peculiar affection passed off, he was changed, all at once, into as prancing, chattering, saucy fellow of his inches as you could meet.

To account for this every-day change in Ned Culkin,—to assign a cause why up to a certain hour he would "shiver with cowl'd," rub his eyes constantly, be sadly despondent, and tottering of gait, and then, that he should become so suddenly a very sparrow in pertness and movement, may appear

difficult. But the daily contrast in the same individual can be accounted for notwithstanding.

Every night that Ned Culkin the gauger lay down, he was brimful of caloric, "from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet." Every day this superabundance of caloric departed from the system ; it was "given out," as I believe the scientific term is. During this "giving out" of his surcharge of caloric, Ned Culkin "shivered with cowlid," Ned Culkin heaved sighs and was sad, Ned Culkin's very limbs shook under him. He was as useless as if he were a sensitive steam-engine without fire under the boiler. This state being irksome to excess, Ned Culkin was wont to get under weigh again by a fresh supply of caloric to replace what had been "given out ;" and so the difficulty of explanation is surmounted. Need I say, in plain words, that Ned Culkin the gauger, the next door neighbour of the Half-pay, was a thorough-going, incorrigible toper ?

The Colonel's next-door-but-one neighbour was Tom O'Loughlin. Tom was a scion of what is

called "a good family." He was but a younger son of a younger branch, yet he had inherited a moderate independence. While this lasted, Tom was a gay, dashing, *sans souci* blade. He rode steeple-chases; he betted like a fellow of spirit, taking any odds offered; he raked, and drank, and sported, without a single glance beyond the excitement of the hour, thus leading, as he himself recklessly expressed it in his favourite toast, "a short life and a merry one!"

All this ended as it needs must end. And now Tom O'Loughlin inhabited the most dilapidated of the shabby-genteel houses above the bridge; that immediately adjoining Ned Culkin's residence.

Tom O'Loughlin was avoided by every one, because he would fain beg or borrow of every one. He had none but chance resources left; such precarious aid as his plagued relatives bestowed on him. His attire was always old and ill assorted, made up of odds and ends of clothing flung to him. In person he was lean, and seemed diminutive from the crouching bend of his body. His head was sunk

between his shoulders; his hands were almost constantly passing through each other at his chest, not far below his chin. There was a self-depreciating meekness in his tone of voice as he spoke, and the wrinkles of his face had taken the expression of an insinuating grin. Even in his extreme poverty, the desire for indulgence had not left him, and he would ingratiate himself wherever his subserviency might lead to gratification. Tom O'Loughlin was known in the "Town of the Cascades" as "the decayed gentleman." And to the credit of the inhabitants be it recorded, that the poor wretch was regarded rather as an object of commiseration than of censure.

These three near neighbours,—the Half-pay, Ned Culkin the gauger, and Tom O'Loughlin, "the decayed gentleman," were three great cronies.

CHAPTER XI.

RICHARD O'MEARA'S CLIENT.

WHEN introducing him to notice, I have said that Richard O'Meara was a splendid man. And so he was.

"If you met him walking down there," said Michael Hanrahan to me, pointing at the same time to the promenade opposite the little Bornoch hotel, "if you met him walking abroad there, you couldn't but take a liking to him. He didn't swagger and want to pass himself off as a grandee, like the Forneyaghs that's strutting so pompous there this moment. No here's the way he went—this way—"

And Michael held himself up, took the cane from

my hand, held it gingerly between his fingers, pointed his toes, extended his large lips to a pleasant simper, and slid along before me with all the grace of motion he could assume.

“You couldn’t for the life of you pass him by,” continued Michael, handing me back my cane, “without, I’d say, falling in love with him. And I never wondered at the poor mistress, God be good to her, to dote upon him, which she did to her dying day. He was a grand fellow entirely, and then he had such a pleasant smile, and such a pleasant word always, and he was such a hearty, good-natured fellow, besides all that, that you’d wish him all sorts of good luck every time you’d cross him.”

Richard O’Meara was the son of one of those called “gentleman-farmers,” a class not uncommon in Ireland. Old Mr. O’Meara was desirous that his favourite son should make his way in the world, and with this view he had educated him well, and had given him the profession of an attorney, or solicitor, whichever may be the proper term. Two years before he had brought his bride to the cottage

near the cascades he had begun to practise as the attorney of the district.

As the result of my inquiries, I have ascertained that owing to his personal endowments, his undoubted capacity, and his known high principles, he began the world with every fair prospect before him. Yet, up to the period of his marriage, Richard O'Meara had gained but little permanent standing in his business. He was too gay a fellow for the drudgery of the desk or for steady application. From personal liking, people wished to employ him, but they paused before intrusting their serious concerns to his care. It was not at the race-course or other place of public amusement, that law-papers could be put in training; nor did his nocturnal orgies prepare his head for the routine labour of his office.

Occasionally in matters of importance, particularly where display was to be made, Richard O'Meara would apply himself to become master of a particular case, and at the sessions-court, or other local tribunal, he would exhibit first-rate ability, and

so gain high applause. And he was popularly regarded as a first-rate advocate.

There was a degree of Quixotism very rare in the profession often guiding our young solicitor in his practice. Whenever the great oppressed the humble, whenever the rich was against the poor, Richard O'Meara was found to be at the weaker side. And on such occasions he brought to bear a resolution, an energy, and a talent that showed what he was made of when he wished to work. It would appear that the less his client had it in his power to recompense him, the more ardent and enthusiastic was he. This tendency of his did not certainly evince great worldly prudence, and sunk him very low in the estimation of his brethren of the sessions-court, as being unprofessional in every sense.

Different persons attributed different motives to Richard O'Meara. Some said that his frequent advocacy of the poor arose from the generosity of his nature, which rose up in combat against whatever had the appearance of oppression. This was Michael Hanrahan's opinion. But this judgment

was repudiated by others who insisted there could not be such a quality as generosity found in combination with an attorney's nature; that even if such a weakness had originally existed, it must have been pulled up, root and branch, during the term of apprenticeship. So another cause was assigned for Richard O'Meara's singular propensity. It was said that he had been slighted by the "gentry" in his endeavours to keep pace with them, and that he "had a sting in for them."

Richard O'Meara's proceedings, whatever their motive may have been, had procured for him the title of "the poor man's attorney."

In a neighbouring county lived at this time an orphan girl. Her father had been long dead, her mother more recently, and she was, though well-descended on both sides, in extreme poverty. It was said that a considerable dowry was withheld from her by a relative living far away, and that through some legal quibble. The poor girl had not means to assert her rights. Richard O'Meara be-

came accidentally acquainted with her ; she was very beautiful and winning, and he soon loved her.

He may have been the poor man's advocate from generous impulse, according to Michael Hanrahan and others kindly disposed towards him, or to satisfy a waspish nature by bestowing his sting here and there, as was on the other hand asserted. But *here* love was the motive-power. And love is a wonderful propeller.

He gained the orphan's suit, and in an instant, I may say, she was rich—comparatively rich.

While acting for this client, the intercourse between them was necessarily constant. Gratitude was in the girl's heart ; gratitude and love are of close kindred ; gratitude is often, as in the present instance, no more than a purveyor to love. The transfer from the one to the other is quickly and readily perfected. There is no need for documentary interference, or for legal technicality, or legal tardiness. And the orphan loved the talented, and thoughtful, and assiduous, and successful, and hand-

some young solicitor to whom she owed the recovery of her dower.

“Dear Mr. O’Meara,” said Ellen McMahon, with tears in her soft eyes, “I can never—never thank you. But I am indeed grateful, deeply grateful.”

She impulsively extended her hand to the person she addressed, and raised her tearful eyes to his. But those eyes, consequent on something they met in his, fell instantly, and love, as he often does, coloured her face deep crimson. And then, by another fantastic proceeding not unusual to him, he took away every drop of blood from her face, and set poor gentle Ellen trembling. She thought she ought to withdraw her hand, for very sensibly she felt that the young solicitor pressed it fervently. But here again love took it upon him to act arbitrarily. He seized her arm, and held it outstretched, while the hand remained where she placed it.

“*I am not deeply grateful, Miss McMahon,*” answered her solicitor. And his rich, full voice was without one sharp, business-like intonation to qualify its mellow touch of “brogue.”

"*I am not grateful,*" he repeated, "and I have no reason to be grateful."

The client's eyes looked up again to inquire the meaning of these words, but they fell even more promptly than before.

"You do not understand my meaning, I see. But listen. I have done you a trifling good, not worthy of your deep gratitude however. In return, how have you acted? You have made me your captive for life—is this a fit return for even so slender a service as I have rendered you? Why then should I be grateful?"

The speaker felt the little hand quiver in his grasp. But was that a smile the solicitor in a new cause saw curving Ellen's lips?

"Mr. O'Meara," she softly began. And then she paused, and paused, courage failing her to proceed.

"I await your plea, my fair client," said the solicitor. Still no answer, until the silence became embarrassing.

"Miss McMahon," at length the solicitor said, "I

will quit all light allusion to the subject I have lightly commenced. Be seated for a moment, and hear me."

He gently placed her in a seat, and took another beside her. He did not part with the passive little hand however. It would have been manifestly unprofessional to do so;—"Possession is nine points of the law," you know.

"Even before your suit commenced I loved you; perhaps my ardency in your cause was owing to this. But I forbore awhile to urge my affection because it might appear as though I were seeking to make my advocacy conditional with you. I came to the resolve that when I had succeeded, as I was determined to do, I would depart, and try to live down a love that might seem interested and mercenary. But this resolution I cannot keep. Before Heaven I declare that had you remained poor, had my exertions in your cause been unsuccessful, I would have sought your love as the most precious thing on earth. Ellen, will you, with full confidence in my motives, bestow it on me now?"

What said the little hand, and what the tremulous lips, and timid eyes, I need not expatiate upon. Was it not Ellen McMahon we have seen brought as Richard O'Meara's bride to the Cottage of the Cascades?

CHAPTER XII.

HISTORY OF THE WONDERFUL LEG. THE LILIPUTIAN
ARMY.

ALMOST immediately following the establishment of the Half-pay in my "Town of the Cascades," he was universally known, and, as I learned, the object of universal good will.

"Michael told me," said Mary Hanrahan, "that down to the dogs an' cats, an' the cocks an' hens, an' the ducks an' geese,—all had a regard for the poor Half-pay. The sparrows themselves made freer with him than with anybody else. Ay, an' I heerd farther than that same: I heerd that if he held up his wooden leg they'd hop on it when they came to pick up the crumbs he'd give them. But

that last was a fable, I'm sure. Michael didn't give credit to it, an' neither did I——"

Between one and two in the afternoon of each day the Half-pay was seen descending the uneven way from his little shabby-genteel residence, delving the wooden leg into the crumbling surface to secure himself against accidents. Then he proceeded to the bridge, whereon he took up his position.

"He was never earlier," said Mary Hanrahan, "than between one and two o'clock. 'Early to bed an' early to rise,' you know ; and becoorse, late to bed is late to rise. An' if 'the early bird catches the worms,' the Half-pay didn't catch a worm while he was amongst us. Ned Culkin the gauger, an' Tom O'Loughlin the decayed gentleman, an' himself, used to sit over their tumbler till all hours—that was all the harm in the poor man. Be the same token there was a name for Ned Culkin the gauger besides his own. People used to call him '*Seldom Sober.*'"

When the Half-pay reached the bridge after "his night over his tumbler," he generally looked down

earnestly, as if to make sure that the cascades were tumbling with their usual vigour, and that nothing was wrong with them. Then he gazed at both banks, and then as far as he could carry his eyes down the water. He was usually provided with a few pebbles to shy at any trout that happened to break the surface below him ; it was not recorded, however, that he had succeeded in hitting a single fish. When the Half-pay's duty was so far discharged, he would wheel round, and placing his back to the parapet of the bridge, he would scrutinize the passengers as intently as if he were a detective on duty.

If a well-looking girleen tripped by, he placed the forefinger of his left hand in contact with the peak of his beaver, and screwed his left eye into a hard wink. If a female of respectable class passed him, he placed the edge of his open left hand above the peak, and did not wink. If one of still better grade came, he raised his beaver, and with a rapid twist of his right wrist, brought his cudgel to a present arms. In return the Half-pay received merry smiles, familiar

nods, and gracious bows,—as the case might be, and suitable to the person acknowledging his salute. With some of his own sex he shook hands; with others he was more distant in his greetings; few went by, however, without some mark of recognition on his part.

When verbally saluted with “Good morrow and good luck to you, Colonel,” or some such accost, he returned a verbal answer—a very concise one, however. The “Good morning to you kindly, So-and-So,” which another man would have used he had contracted to a monosyllable once or twice repeated, according to his appreciation of the person. It was either “Maw,” or “Maw—maw—maw.”

Nor did the Half-pay confine his notice to the grown-up passengers on the bridge. Not one child scampered by him that he did not tap on the head with his cudgel, not so hard as to hurt him, but quite hard enough to make him pause in his race and look back at him in astonishment. At first he puzzled them, one and all. As they opened their eyes, and stared at him in wonder, to ascertain

whether he was friend or foe, the assailant, with erect neck and closely-clasped teeth, would be observed straining his eyes after some far-off object up the water, and beckoning as if to some one at a distance.

This clever deception was not however of long continuance. Little heads were laid together, spies were set; very shortly the Half-pay was convicted, on undeniable testimony, of being the assailant of the juvenile discoverers. And with childish acuteness it was understood that the taps were given in play only. As soon as this conclusion was arrived at, war was declared, and plans were devised for carrying on hostilities. Keeping beyond the reach of the cudgel, forces were mustered, defiance was proclaimed. The stoutest and nimblest of the urchins were detached, to creep cautiously and pluck the enemy by the skirts, the successful onslaught to be followed by an immediate retreat to the shouting comrades who shared the glory of the enterprise. Following such assaults, the Half-pay would bounce and whirl his cudgel, as Orlando

Furioso would have done. So bold did the assailants become that one daring little fellow, armed with as heavy a bludgeon as he could wield, stole, Indian-like, on the apparently unwatchful foe, and inflicted a terrible bang on—the wooden leg. The Half-pay immediately stooped, and chafed the member, and moaned, as it were, with pain, and fiercely brandished his weapon, and looked as if he were a Gulliver, ready and willing to swallow the entire throng of screaming, prancing Liliputians.

Except they were altogether new-comers, the Half-pay could not henceforth get one head within reach of his blackthorn; he could not make one prisoner to retain as hostage; he could stump fast enough to the assault; in a hand-to-hand struggle he must have been the victor. But this proved to be a guerilla campaign against a regular army. The enemy retreated instantly on his approach, to renew the attack when opportunity offered.

Thus beset, unable to bring the foe to close quarters, the Half-pay hit upon a piece of generalship worthy of him. Amongst a collection of old iron

offered for sale he discovered a rusty blunderbuss-barrel. He got part of his wooden leg sawn off, and the blunderbuss-barrel substituted. The original touch-hole at the side being plugged up, another was bored uppermost instead. A wooden plug was fitted to the muzzle to be inserted and withdrawn at pleasure. And the leg being thus rendered composite, part wood, part iron, the owner issued from the smith's forge in Bow-lane accoutred for combat.

The first discharge of this piece of ordnance (loaded with powder only) scattered the guerillas in every direction, and at length a prisoner was captured. The little rascal, so brave before, squalled within the grip of the remorseless captor. He was led in durance to an apple-stall at the foot of the bridge, and every available opening in his uniform was stuffed with rosy fruit. Thus disgraced he was suffered to prance away, as nimbly as his freight allowed him to progress.

The very next battle the conquering Half-pay had as many prisoners in his keeping as he could take

charge of. Ultimately he was forced to confine his captures to one enemy each engagement—so expensive was it to provision them for their subsequent march.

Not only did this general defeat his enemies, but, following the example of the ancient Romans, he took them into his alliance to a certain extent. For his former foes sought it as a desirable privilege to be allowed to fire off the composite leg that had created such consternation at the outset. And expert gunners some of them became, as was shown in my description of the cannonading at the bonfire.

I should add that no matter whether the Half-pay winked at the pretty girls, or saluted others according to station; or shook hands with some men, or said "Maw!" to more;—while he stood on the bridge, or stumped through the streets; whether he fought battles, gained victories, or captured prisoners, the Half-pay spoke little, and never laughed. Nevertheless, it was shrewdly guessed that between his lips and hard-closed teeth a good deal of silent laughter went on; that he internally laughed at his

urchin foes, and internally laughed with high relish at the impenetrable mystery in which he had contrived to envelop himself—impenetrable to the keenest scrutiny of the dwellers in my “Town of the Cascades.”

CHAPTER XIII.

FAIR ELLEN, HER THREE KNIGHTS, AND HER
ATTENDANT MAIDEN.

WHEN Richard O'Meara said to his Ellen that he would have wooed her in poverty, for the treasure of herself, he but spoke his real sentiments. He was not one to utter falsehoods, even to a girl, as many "honourable" fellows will think it very fine to do.

That his love for Ellen McMahon was real and sincere, there is no question. Constitutionally ardent and impetuous, his affection for her was as warm and deep as such a nature could bring forth.

He was a disinterested fellow, too, incapable of taking a mean advantage of any one. And that

his love for Ellen was nowise mercenary, he fully proved, even to the most suspicious. Previous to the marriage ceremony, the bride's dowry, which I may say he had bestowed upon her, he secured to herself, every penny of it, sure and fast. This might be about three thousand pounds in funded property ; and the income thence accruing was payable to her alone.

Ellen McMahon was all heart, but there was no self-reliance in her character, no self-assertion, no self-sustainment. Her every look was an appeal for aid and protection. From all I could learn, the faultless, manly person of Richard O'Meara had fascinated her eye ; his generosity and services had given him her love.

Another in Ellen's position would have felt there were certain unpleasantnesses to be borne as Richard O'Meara's wife.

Previous to his marriage, Richard O'Meara the attorney ambitioned, as I have hinted, to keep pace with men of station and fortune who were his chance companions at the race-course or other places

of public amusement. But he found that although he and such high folk were on good terms generally, he received no encouragement as a visitor at their houses, or in their family circles. Just the contrary. Prudent *pères de famille*, or more prudent mothers, would not place so fine a young fellow on a footing of dangerous intimacy with their daughters. Hence the "sting" which it was supposed he kept in reserve for aristocratic suitors in the local courts. Persons of the middling class resented the attorney's assumption of superiority. With these he had no footing ; neither did he seek it.

For these reasons Ellen O'Meara, when she had taken possession of her Cottage of the Cascades, had no female companions. There were no bridal visitings, no bridal entertainments, no bridal fuss or pleasant bustle. But Ellen O'Meara did not feel this isolation a privation. It was her nature to shrink from the glaring sunshine, and to bloom sweetest in the shade. Her husband's sustaining love was sufficient for Ellen O'Meara. With his arm to lean on, with his smile to greet her, and his

jocund humour to elicit her silvery laughter, she did not pine for foreign associations.

Besides, Ellen could command the services of three knights as devoted as knights could be, and of one attendant maiden, whose fidelity and attachment were not to be surpassed.

The first of these faithful knights was Michael Hanrahan. Second to Michael Hanrahan I will place the mastiff, Teague. Third in order was our friend the Half-pay, who was a knight after a chivalry of his own. And the devoted maiden was Mary Malone, the chief narrator of the circumstances I am relating.

So that, although without visitors, and leaving the all-engrossing attachment between husband and wife out of the question, Ellen did not regard her life as a solitary one. The three knights I have named and the one attendant maiden were influenced in their devotion to her by her beauty, by her dove-like gentleness, and very probably by her timid dependence. And the knights were quite ready to encounter giants, dragons, ogres, or any

other odds, as was the maiden to suffer, for her behoof.

It is an enticing day. The sun is smiling down upon the river, and the river, as it dimples onward, smiles in return up to the sun. The sun's rays are refracted into the prismatic colours in their passage through the medium of the waterfalls. The winged breeze is gamboling through the foliage, and chequers the green sod with dancing light and shadow. It is a day to enjoy a refreshing saunter : one is urged to it just as the linnet that has been constructing its nest in the garden-hedge is impelled to vault upward and downward, and to flutter joyously in ether.

Ellen O'Meara stood on the threshold of her cottage, and looked abroad. The breeze, as it flew by, kissed her cheeks and forehead, and fondled with her auburn curls. The dog Teague was seated without : anon he looked full into the face of his lady ; then he turned his eyes upward, as if

scanning the firmament ; then he capered a sedate caper, looked over the right shoulder, and over the left, sat him down again, and fixed his full gaze on the object of his devotion. The dog's meaning was manifest : "Let us fetch a walk by the water-side, fair mistress : it will be very pleasant. And, my word for it, we shall have no rain to-day."

At this juncture, Michael Hanrahan entered the garden by the green wicket at the right-hand side. Michael was bareheaded, and he was, as Mary expressed it, "humming a *dhass*." As soon as he observed the lithe form standing beneath the festooned porch, he wheeled sharp round ; with both his palms he smoothed his front, gave the locks at his temples a twist round his finger, scraped his large whiskers forward after the manner of a rabbit dusting the sand from its jaws, and then he wheeled round again, his expansive lips dressed in their broadest simper.

Michael stepping gingerly along, approached his "posy."

"Ma'am," he said, bowing to her, "I'm afther discoorsing Master Dick round at the office. As

busy as a bee in a paddock he is—and more of that to him is my prayer. He can't leave the job he's at, Ma'am, and he sent his compliments and his love by me, Ma'am. And, Michael," says he, "tell the posy—"

"The *what*, Michael?"

"Ha, ha! That was a slip of the tongue, Ma'am. 'Tis so often on my lips that they're used to it. It's only the name we have for you, Ma'am, Mary and myself. And sure you are the posy of our garden—the posy of posies! But you won't be displeased, Ma'am, against us for calling you so?"

"Who would be displeased, Michael, at being called by such a pretty name?"

"Well, but it wasn't the posy Masther Dick called you, Ma'am. 'Michael,' says he, 'tell Mrs. O'Meara from me to go take a walk by the river-side. And let you and honest Teague walk before her, Michael,' he says in his pleasant way, 'and don't let Saint Pether if you meet him look cross at her. And let Mary Malone walk out too,' says Masther Dick, 'tis a fine day for it, Michael, and

there will be health in it for ye all. So be off as fast as ye can,' says he to myself."

"I was thinking of a stroll myself, Michael," answered the posy, "and since Mr. O'Meara wishes it, we had better set off as he desires us."

Michael was on the alert instantly. Mary was summoned to attend her mistress, and very shortly they were ready to set out. Michael furnished himself with a long staff, his pony, as he called it, too long to be leant on, and which he grasped after the fashion of our grandmothers, now, they tell me, creeping in amongst their modish great-grand-daughters. He and Teague took the front rank, "the posy" following, Mary a step behind. Michael stepped out with the air of a herald, and after a gambol or two Teague fell into his staid, business trot.

"Michael marched along as proud as a paycock," said Mary to me, "an' if you saw the care he took of us, you'd be plaised at it. 'Not too near the water there, Ma'am,' he'd say; 'the bank is slippery.' 'A little damp just there, Ma'am,' he'd

say; 'step over it.' An' he'd dhraw a criss-cross with his wattle to mark where the damp was on the path. If the bough of a tree hung low, he'd pull it to one side, an' with a nice bow, like any gentleman, he'd keep it out of the way until we'd pass by. An' when our posy would say, as soft as a turtle-dove, 'Thank you, thank you, Michael,' my poor Michael would lean his two hands upon his wattle—that he'd put slanting,—an' he'd kick up his two heels behind, as high as his head (I couldn't show you how he done that, you know), an' away before us he'd scamper like a buck, to keep hurt or harm out of our way. If a flower was growing up on a bank, or down in a hollow, an' that he thought it purty to look at, up he went like a mad cat, or down he darted like a weazel, to pluck it for our posy. An' if you'd seen how handsome he'd make his offering, indeed an' indeed you'd have a liking for him, though you were his enemy!

"An' the poor Teague," continued Mary, her face lighting up brilliantly as her memory reflected back past sunshine, "*that* was a dog with more

knowledge than many a Christian I knew in my time. If you saw how he watched Michael cutting his capers, an' if you heard him saying, 'Wow—wow—wow,' without barking at all, you'd undherstand him to mean quite plain, 'Well done, Michael, my boy!' Ay, an' the honest dog must give pleasure to the posy too, his ownself. He'd bring his bit of stick an' he'd lay it down at her feet, an' he'd cut a curry-whibble round, an' look at the wather. An' we'd all know he was saying without words; 'I can swim aqual to any duck, wouldn't you like to see me at it?' Then the posy would pitch the stick about half a yard or so; she couldn't pitch it farther, the crature—an' you'd almost laugh to see the great job she made of that same. Then 'twas mighty pleasant to hear the pullaloo of joy coming from the dog, an' in he'd toss himself from the high bank, an' come back to lay his bit of stick down at the posy's feet again, looking as proud as a lord, the poor fellow. An' indeed you'd wondher to look at him when we met a sthranger coming the way. Teague would march before us an' keep his eye close on the watch until

the person passed a good piece off,—as much as to say, ‘Don’t touch our posy for your life!’ Poor Teague!—poor Teague!

“An’ then there was the Half-pay too. Far we didn’t go on our way until there was a loud shot, that made the posy an’ myself cry out an’ jump a-one-side. ‘Tis the Half-pay,’ says Michael, lookin’ back at us. Michael had managed, as I found out afterwards, to put up the Half-pay to the knowledge that we were to go a-walking, an’ of the way we were to go. An’ sure enough, the very next turn we came to, there was the Half-pay. You’d think there was a rod of iron down through his neck, an’ into his back-bone, he stood up so sthaight. An’ if you didn’t know him, you’d suppose he was ready to bite you, he looked so glum, an’ stared so wicked. While we passed him he took off his hat an’ held it up high, an’ he stuck his stick out before him. Our posy bowed her head to him very handsome to see, an’ says she, ‘Good day to you, Curnel.’ An’ the Half-pay made answer in a way of his own:—‘Maw—maw—Ma—dame!’ he says to her. Curious

enough it happened—six times at the least, before we came to the end of our walk, the Half-pay met us, every time we met him he was standing as stiff as before, every time his hat off an' his stick out before him, an' every time what he said was 'Maw—maw—Ma—dame!' With only one leg, as I may say, to his body, he circumvented us some way, although we had two good legs apiece undher us, an' Teague, had four to his own share. Wasn't it curious, Sir?" asked Mary, smiling her arch smile.

"Was the Colonel in love with your 'posy,' Mary?"

"Not very far from it, in my honest judgment, Sir," answered Mary. "An' then, my dear," she went on, "when we were coming back, who should we see running to meet us but Masther Dick his ownself. Did you ever see a young horse prancing through a pasture, frolicking along with his head up, and his mane straming, an' his eyes flaming an' dancing in his head? Well he put me in mind of the young horse as he came towards us, an' 'twould delight your very heart to see our posy springing

like a young deer to meet him. An' then they went arm-in-arm together, like a happy couple, as they were."

"What became of you then, Mary?"

"Why, Sir, I fell into the rear rank, as the sodgers say—alongside of my poor Michael an' his wattle."

"Much against your will, to be sure, Mary."

"No, indeed, honey—with a heart an' a half, to tell you the honest thruth.

"Oh!" said Mary, "this was one day out of many happy days, when sunshine was around us in the darkest weather. 'Twas a sorrowful thing the sunshine wasn't to last."

And Mary's smile was one of sad retrospection.

CHAPTER XIV.

MICHAEL AND HIS FOSTER-BROTHER.

MICHAEL HANRAHAN'S attachment to Richard O'Meara was uncompromising, ardent, and unselfish. Michael was not a servant, properly so called, and yet, without making any terms, he had taken upon him all the duties, and more than the duties, of a servant; no *quid pro quo* obligations on either side.

This to some may appear strange, and will doubtless make Michael's pretension to worldly wisdom problematical. I do not think Michael could boast the possession of an overstock of "*la sagesse du monde*" the day he "kicked up his heels" while attending his "posy," as described by Mary in the last Chapter. Nor do I think that up to this

hour he can be said to carry a sufficient ballast of good sense, taking the term "good sense" as it is commonly understood,—a due foresight of one's own interests before the interests of any one else, and a due preference of the same. For all that it is my judgment that a counterpart of honest Michael would be worth to any of my friends, good wages, good board, good lodging, good clothing, kind treatment, and full trust and esteem.

In his natural disposition he was affectionate and cheerful; in presence of piper or fiddler he was hilarious. From culture he was virtuous and eschewed evil, yet his ethics were shallow. His well was not, so to speak, deep, and yet I assert that he was nearer the truth than if a plummet were required to sound it. It is a question with me if the astute philosopher who can measure the divine precept by the law of nature, and who can hold a balance, as it were, in which to weigh the questions of right or wrong to a nicety, be as good a man. Michael accepted the divine law without poisoning it on his palm, satisfied with the impress of the coin.

Pray excuse this dissertation on Michael Hanrahan. When I meet such a one, I think the more of our common humanity.

To say nothing, however, of Michael's inherent propensity, there was other good reason why he should exemplify his disposition in a particular way towards Richard O'Meara. Was he not, as I have said, Richard O'Meara's foster-brother?—a tie of so many strands in Ireland, that legal two-edged swords, yclept Acts of Parliament, were found insufficient in the olden time to sever it. Richard O'Meara and Michael Hanrahan had grown up together, and now, at the time I write of, Michael was installed at the cottage, as a mere matter-of-course, acting as major-domo, friend, and servant.

Michael Hanrahan it was who had superintended the preparations for the reception of the bride. Michael it was who had, with one exception, regulated the household. Michael it was who had engaged Mary Malone as the special attendant of the new mistress.

“Do you think, Mary,” I inquired, “that he

was altogether disinterested in his selection of you?"

"Disinterested? I don't exactly know the meaning of that word, Sir."

"Well, I mean that perhaps his choice was made as much out of liking for yourself, as from his certainty of your fitness for the post."

"Ah! now I have you, Sir!—You think he pitched on me because he'd rather see me every day than be waiting for Sunday to come about?"

"My very meaning, Mary."

"An' upon my word an' credit, you were never more right in your life, Sir. Ah! I see you're a man that has gumption, an' when you were young—if it's not making over free to say so—you used to coort a bit too, I'll be bound."

"Everybody 'coorts a bit,' as you call it, Mary."

"An' some too much," said Mary, with her pleasant laugh.

That Michael Hanrahan was filled with admiration of his posy is certain—just such admiration, I take it, as was expressed towards Marie Antoinette

of France by his countryman Burke, in the British Parliament. But exclusive of his devotion to her beauty, and her gentle dependent nature, Michael's attachment was even of a higher character. He looked upon the young wife as the instrument, to use his own expression, "in the hands of God," for the reclamation of the young man he loved, from the destructive career he had led even up to the period of his marriage.

"He was rushing headlong to owld Nick, God bless the hearers," was Michael's pithy conclusion to a rather lengthy statement of Richard O'Meara's doings.

"An' I was certain," he added, "as that I walked above ground, he could never find it in his heart to give pain to the crature he loved so well. An' sure the love of a king, with a crown on his head an' a sceptre in his hand, wouldn't be one bit more than was her due!"

"My heart used to bleed to see him," said Michael another time, "an' for all that, although he disthressed me beyond measure, I couldn't quarrel

with him, an' I should stick to him somehow, whatever road he thravelled. I'll tell you one or two things now that happened them times—that is, before he was married."

I should perhaps remark here that occasionally Michael was the narrator of events, but more generally Mary told me her story in the cliff "cobbey-house."

"One night," said Michael, "one night out of the night after night that he went on the batther, the poor fool, the cock was crowing for the dawn when he made his way home. To be sure he remained in bed until far in the day, and people were calling and calling about their law business, and no sign of my gentleman in his office. I think the less rubbing you have to an attorney the less holes will be in your jacket. But above all, if you *have* the misfortune to get into the clutches of one of 'em, let an acre or two be between you and a 'turney that dhrinks or you'll have cause to repent. A hundhred chances to one but he'll put the wrong end before, or tangle your skein in such a way that

a score judges with their wigs on couldn't unravel it, and you'll be left in the lurch."

"Indeed, Michael, the wisest way is to keep wide of the meshes of the law."

"That's as thrue a saying as ever came from Solomon. Well, to go on with my story. My foster-brother, Masther Dick the 'turney, had *his* net full of fools this time, and they were calling, and calling, and calling. I think I towld as many lies that morning, heaven forgive me, as if I was bred up to be an attorney myself,—and 'tis their thrade, you know. I was ready to cry down tears when I listened to the people complaining, and abusing, and scolding. 'Twould make a Turk sorrowful, to think that the handsome tip-top young man—ay tip-top in every way—should be ruining himself as he was. In the height of my throuble a thought came into my head. I crept up the stairs very aisy, and I opened my lad's door as quietly as if I was a first-rate thief. 'Twas between one and two o'clock in the day then, and he was sleeping as sound as if his eyelids were stitched together. I stole in on my

tippy-toes, I made one bould grab, and off I scudded with every tack of the bed-clothes. I dropped them on the lobby a good distance from the room-door, and down stairs I scampered in hot haste to get out of harm's way. Then I peeped up through the bannisters to see what would come of it. As sure as I'm telling it to you, out comes my gentleman blinking like an owl in the sunshine, and he takes up the bed-clothes again and carries them back with him, hugged tight in his arms, as if he was mighty fond of 'em.

"Well, my dear, when I thought he was fast again, I crept up stairs the second time. The rogue didn't latch his door, thinking to entrap me — 'twas only closed, and I pushed it little by little until I got my head inside. There he was, stretched to his full length, and the clothes tucked round him as snug as a thrush in his nest. You'd swear he was as hard asleep as before, but I seen the uppermost eye give a couple of twinkles. 'Ha, ha! that's a fox's sleep, my lad,' says I to myself, and by the luck of the world I seen the nose of the

boot-jack just peeping out from the blankets, an' then I seen the same boot-jack stealing up half an inch at a time. Away with myself as fast as the legs could carry me ; an' well for me I did, for the head was only just at the wrong side of the door when whack comes the boot-jack with the sound of a cannon-ball, an' 'twas sent with a good aim to the very spot where the head was only half a second of time before. I don't think I'd be here to day clearing this tumbler and telling my story if I wasn't so quick."

"Rather a serious retaliation that for well-meant interference, Michael."

"When he made his appearance down stairs more than an hour afther, he said to me, in his own pleasant, smiling way, 'I didn't intend to pelt at you, Michael, only to frighten the seven senses out of you.' But I didn't give credit to him. By my word 't isn't all out safe to depend on a half-tipsy man at any time ; he'd give a brain-blow, maybe, an' call it a joke. But I couldn't fall out with the poor fellow at all somehow.

"But I gave him a bit of my mind that day;" —Michael laid down the tumbler he was rubbing at, and he stood full in front of me. He stretched out his right arm, and protruded his right leg, assuming an oratorical attitude; and there was earnestness, I would even say impressiveness, in his look.

"I says to him as this: 'Masther Dick,' says I, 'I'm dead ashamed of you, and I'm grieved for you—'

"'More fool you, my good Michael,' he made answer. 'Kick the shame and the grief away from you,' he said, 'they're very grum comrades to thravel with.'

"'The road *you're* thravelling,' I said, taking up his word, 'won't bring you to luck or grace, or earn for you a good name.'

"'For the matter of that, Michael,' he said to me, 'the name I have is a very good one. Richard O'Meara is my name; I'm come of a good ould stock, as you know, an' I don't desire a betther name than my own.'

“‘You’ll disgrace it, Masther Dick,’ was my answer, ‘if you don’t turn yourself to another coorse. Mind my warning, Masther Dick; if you follow on;—on, on, on you’ll go, until you’ll sink deep into the black bog that you can’t escape from if you were to kick the legs from your body thrying to get loose.’

“‘Michael Hanrahan,’ he says, ‘I did not expect you would condemn your fosther-brother to be smothered in a bog-hole.’

“‘I would save you, Masther Dick, if I had the power. You are as well brought up a young man as walks on Ireland’s ground; you’re fit to go shouldher to shouldher with any lord if you’d mind yourself. But ’tis “welcome thrumperry, for want of company” with you. There’s your business gone to ould Nick—’

“‘No wondher, Mick. That same gentleman always has a finger in the pie that’s prepared in an attorney’s office—’

“‘The money would be as plenty with you as the corn on the barn flure—’

“ ‘ Ay, when I had thrashed it out of my clients,’ the rogue said.

“ ‘ You don’t want the sense,’ I answered to him, ‘ but you smother it with the liquor, and won’t give it fair play. Masther Dick, Masther Dick, it’s time for you to look about you, I can tell you !’

“ ‘ I can do that at all events, Michael, whatever comes of it.’ And he turned his head round about, and round about, and looked in every direction. ‘ I can follow your advice in that, at all events, Michael,’ he said.

“ That was the way with him ever, an’ always turning my words into a joke, an’ still dhrinking, dhrinking. Whatever I could say or do had no effect.

“ I’ll tell you what happened another day,” continued Michael, resuming the occupation he had for a time laid aside.

“ There was little money in the house, and where could it come from when there was no earning?— all going out, an’ nothing coming in! ‘ There’s no use in your expecting breakfast here,’ I said to

Masther Dick, about three o'clock in the day, when he walked down stairs to me. 'No tay in the tay-pot,' says I, 'an' nothing to buy it with, an' there's no bread or anything.' I turned the taypot upside down to prove to him 'twas empty. Matthers weren't so bad all out, to be sure, but it came into my mind 'twas a good way to tell him what I thought of his doings. He put on as solemn a face as if he was saying his prayers, though he was humbugging all the while.

" 'Here, Michael, my honest friend, take this,' he says, an' he hands me a sixpence. 'Lay it out carefully,' he says; 'purchase one pennyworth of buttermilk in the market, this we'll divide between us, share an' share alike. Then provide two penny buns, to munch with the buttermilk, an' you an' I will breakfast gloriously. The change, threepence, will provide for to-morrow.' He took me by the arm, an' looked like a Solomon. 'The docthors say, Michael,' he says, 'that the tay is a wishy-washy thing, an' buttermilk they praise to the skies for being wholesome. By breakfasting on butter-

milk and penny buns, we'll cut our coats according to our cloth, an' we'll be healthful into the bargain.'

"Another time I came to him, 'Masther Dick,' says I, 'look at the way I am.' An' I showed him my coat all in babby-rags. 'We'll soon be without a stitch to cover us, an' after a while we can't so much as show ourselves at mass, without disgracing ourselves. Body and soul we're doomed to suffer by the way you're going on.'

"'Upon my honour,' he says, looking at me as if he was sorry at the heart's core, 'upon my honour, my poor honest Michael, you're like a plucked goose, surely. But I'll soon provide for you, and clothe you well. I'll make you turn out like a cock after moulting. Hould here,' he says, an' he grips me by the collar before I could be on my guard of him; no more than the man in the moon could I guess what he was about. I struggled hard to get loose, but I might as well expect to get from the jaws of a vice, he held me so tight. In no time my tattered coat was flying about in bits an' scraps, and while you could count six, his own long-tailed

coat was on my back, my arms aching from the mauling he gave me.

“ ‘Now Michael Hanrahan,’ says he, ‘you’re fit to go to mass, an’ to go a coorting afther mass is over, if you’re in the humour.’ And he gave me a slap between the shouldhers. I looked behind me, an’ there was the tail of the coat scraping the ground a good distance in the rear of me. I felt the collar touching my poll up near the top of my head, and the cuffs were a mile or so beyond the ends of my fingers. If the world was lost at the moment I couldn’t help roaring out laughing to see the show he made of me. “What are you laughing at, Michael?” he says, ‘you’re an out-an-out-dandy, I can tell you—such a dandy as you wouldn’t see in the city of Dublin itself.’ ‘Faith ’tis you I believe,’ says I, an’ I laughed the louder, an’ poor Masther Dick was obliged to laugh out too, although he did his best to keep a serious face on himself. And we both laughed together until our sides ached, to see me marching along with the coat-tails scraping the flure.

"This was the way with him," Michael sadly remarked. "If I scowlded him, or if I thried to undhermine him, 'twas all the same. He turned everything into a joke; there was never a cross word from him, no matther whether I was cranky or conthiving for his good. But 'twas all the same,—no cure, no stoppage of the dhrink.

"He took a start, as he sometimes did, and gave over his ways, when he took up the cudgels for Miss Ellen McMahan, who became his wife. I had my thrust in God, that by her means he might be turned from his sinfulness. Sorry, sorry am I to say that I was disappointed."

CHAPTER XV.

THE KEG OF POTTEEN.—HOW NED CULKIN WAS MADE
PURBLIND.

As a general rule, the Half-pay, every night before he could get into bed, went through a perplexing contest with his composite leg. Occasionally he happened to undo the fastenings with comparative facility; but when this occurred it was a lucky chance, and was an exception to the rule. For the most part he found the straps, and buckles, and ligaments sadly out of place, intricate and complex in their arrangements, and almost impossible to be traced and loosened. My own opinion is, that the degree of complexity, more or less puzzling as the case might be, depended not a little on the extent of potations indulged in previous to seeking his couch.

A statue of Bacchus with such a leg as that supporting the Half-pay would be unclassical. But if I suppose such a limb attached to the body of the god of drunkenness, it would puzzle his divinity to unstrap it, as often as it puzzled the Half-pay, and from a like cause.

One night, or rather morning, for the dawn was faintly tinting the sky from east to west, the Half-pay was engaged in one of these struggles with his leg. The buckles were not to be found where they had been at his uprise ; some one must have meddled with the fastenings in the course of the day. Who could have tampered with him ? Where could the practical jest have been executed ? Not on the bridge ?—No. Not in the street ?—No. Could it have been in the widow-woman's back room, where he had spent a jolly night ?—He rather thought not. But it might have been.

Puffing very hot breath from him, as a result of his struggle, he paused to think over the affair. Was that loud single knock he heard connected with the prank played on him ?—Another knock,—and

another,—with an interval between each knock, as if they were signal knocks. His head had been drooping, and he raised it. His eyes had been closed, and he distended them. And he expanded his ears to listen.

Knock—knock—knock—again. *Where* was the knocking?—Who was the knocker?—These mysterious knocks were not given at his door. No. Were they against Ned Culkin's door? He thought so.

Knock—knock—knock—a third time,—three knocks each time—yes, he had reckoned them. Three times three, made six,—no,—nine. Ay, right,—nine knocks. Was that a door pulled open?—Not his door, no,—Ned Culkin's door;—almost sure of it,—he ought to know the creak of Ned Culkin's door. Ah!—And what was that rolling along? It sounds like a big cannon-ball rolling over a wooden bridge.

Well! that is most singular, is it not? Where is the wooden bridge? There is no wooden bridge in Ned Culkin's house—no—not one. And yet he knows by the hollow sound, that the rolling of the

twenty-four-pound ball is across a wooden bridge. He'd swear to that at all events. There again!—

It is Ned Culkin's door that has been banged to. So far there is a certainty. But the wooden bridge, and the twenty-four-pound ball—require explanation—require to be thoroughly examined into. There was a something in the business—some concealment—some ambiguity—some mystery between nine knocks, Ned Culkin's door, the twenty-four-pound ball, and the wooden bridge. That he was solemnly bound before heaven and earth—bound—to scrutinize to the bottom.

The Half-pay endeavoured to control the swaying of his head, thereby to interrupt the singing in his brain, that he might bring his steadiest faculties to bear on this momentous matter. He would not allow the question to remain in doubt. He would issue forth. He would institute a rigid scrutiny, and leave nothing doubtful as to knocks—knockee—Ned Culkin's door—twenty-four-pound ball—or wooden bridge.

He stood up for the purpose of carrying out the

indispensable duty imposed on him, when his leg, most unaccountably, and of its own accord, separated from him and tumbled about. Of course he fell prostrate. It required considerable exertion and no small degree of ingenuity to arise and maintain his balance on the single member now remaining to him.

The task of refitting the refractory and treacherous limb that had so inopportunately deserted him, he found to be a hopeless one ; so that after a few unavailing attempts, he abandoned perforce his laudable design of strict investigation, and tumbled into bed. In a very short time the occurrences of the day, together with the unexplained later events, became a mass of confusion in his brain, chasing each other in most perplexing complexity, and at times mingling together in an indescribable hodge-podge.

The Half-pay had rolled himself up in his bed-covering about four o'clock of a spring morning. At two in the afternoon of the same day he had taken his usual stand on the bridge, with his back to the parapet, bestowing his salutations to the passengers,

varied according to circumstances, as described in a previous Chapter.

Through the centre window of the little house, next door but one to that inhabited by the Half-pay, Tom O'Loughlin "the decayed gentleman" thrust his head. Tom could look out of the centre window of his residence without delaying to raise the sash. Originally this window had had twelve panes of glass in it. From time to time, nine out of the twelve had been broken away; three, therefore, only remained at the present writing. The three upper panes these were, and they had escaped fracture, as being most out of harm's way. So when Tom O'Loughlin wished to enjoy the breeze, or to note the occurrences without, his head was thrust as far as the shoulders through the centre opening of the lowest tier but one, and generally both his arms were protruded at the same time through the spaces at either side, that his hands might meet and fondle each other as was their wont, beneath his chin. It will be understood from what is set down here that if an unglazed window gives an appearance of dilapi-

dation to a house, and causes besides an excess of ventilation at times, such a window is not nevertheless without its recommendation.

As the Half-pay stood on the bridge, the decayed gentleman looked from his pillory, and observing his friend where he expected to find him, he issued forth to join him.

"A good morrow and the best of luck to you, Colonel," said the decayed gentleman.

"Maw, maw," returned the Half-pay.

"You're looking grand out-an'-out to-day, Colonel, and more of that to you I say," flattered Tom O'Loughlin.

"Right—well!—"

"Sure I knew you were by looking at you, and right glad am I to see it. Believe my word for it, I am. Well—well—well. Hadn't we a great night out-an'-out last night?"

"Jolly—jovial!—"

"Dick O'Meara is a grand fellow, entirely, entirely, merry, and hearty, and good-natured. A prince of a fellow, by gog."

"Fine—fellow!—"

"Ay, every inch a good fellow;—the heart in the right spot, Colonel,—and able to take his nourishment, Colonel, I can tell you. When he used to come among us, he never earned a curse for leaving his liquor behind him—never!"

"Sound—stomach?"

"Sound as a trout. He was worth his weight in gold at our meetings round the festive board, until he was unfortunate enough to get married, the poor fool. His wife was making a stay-at-home-John of him. The Lord knows my heart bled for him;—I pitied him; indeed, indeed I did."

And the decayed gentleman assumed a most lachrymose expression of face, and his tone was sad, very sad.

"Why?"

"Well—to be sure he picked out a beautiful young wife—"

"Lovely—creature!" and the Half-pay solemnly raised his beaver, and put it on again.

"But, my poor, honest, hearty Dick O'Meara—I compassionate you for all that. Your handsome

wife was making a *sheelah* of you ! But he'll come on again, Colonel, please goodness. He'll snap the apron-string, and be king of the Gregory once more ! He didn't go far last night, to be sure, and made off before we began to spend the evening. But 'tis a good sign to see him leave the petticoat government at all."

"I—like—him !"

"He is to be liked, by gog, and the more you meet him, the more *gra* you'll have for him. Colonel,—'twill be a little paradise within at Ned Culkin's for a good month or more."

"How ?"

"Ah, ha !—Did you hear nothing last night before you lay down?—anything in this way?—" The decayed gentleman gave three knocks with his knuckles against the Half-pay's chest.

"Yes—yes !" — snapped the Half-pay eagerly ; and he, in turn, gave three separate punches downwards—with his composite leg.

"And something rolling along with a hollow sound ?"

"Yes—yes!"

"*Nine* knocks in all?"

"Yes!"

"Well! Darby Kenealy give nine knocks at Ned Culkin's door to warn him that he was there—with a keg of his primeest potteen!"

"Ay!"

"And when the door was opened, in rolled the keg along Ned Culkin's hall—all along to the back door it went—rolling."

"Yes!"

"And then you may be sure Ned Culkin went to roost crowing like a game-cock."

"I see."

"You know, Colonel, that an 'officer of the excise,' or a gauger, like Ned Culkin—the one means the other—is made near-sighted, like the best of us, by drinking potteen-punch, and could not see the still it came from if he had Lord Rosse's telescope."

"I see. I—see!"

"And so Darby Kenealy gave nine knocks at

Ned Culkin's door, and in rolled the keg of potteen when the door was opened. Ned Culkin stood well behind the door, and he didn't see Darby Kenealy at all, nor did Darby Kenealy see Ned Culkin. But for all that Darby knew right well that he'd make the gauger purblind. And purblind he will be, and purblind you and I will be to keep him company, as long as the keg of potteen has a *thuch* in it."

"I—see!"

"Isn't that good news, Colonel? We'll have our skinful while it lasts. Night or day we won't be sober, please goodness! and we'll drink Darby Kenealy's health, and that he may live long, many and many a time—so we will!"

"Right!"

"Here's Ned Culkin himself coming down to us, and I'll bet ten to one—will you take me up, Colonel?"

"No."

"That we'll begin the boozing-match this very night."

With a tottering step Ned Culkin joined the

other two. He did not totter like a drunkard, but like one affected with paralysis.

"Raw, could day," he said, although the sun was shining blandly, and there was little breeze to temper the ardour of his rays.

"Indeed and upon my word 'tis very sharp weather," assented the decayed gentleman, his thoughts fixed on the expected invitation to his "little paradise." "Very sharp, cold weather it is, neighbour Culkin."

"Hot—hot!" dissented the Half-pay.

"I am shivering, every limb of me," said Ned Culkin, "and I'm could, down to the nails of my toes. Uffe—uffe! There's like an ague on me. Colonel?"

"Well!"

"We'll go down to Joe Darmody's and have a glass of brandy to warm us. Will you come, Curnel? Will you come, Tom?"

"Come!" answered the Half-pay.

"With a heart and a half," gleefully assented Tom O'Loughlin.

"Before we go, Curnel," said Ned Culkin, "I want to tell you there will be a few friends with me in my poor cabin to-night. You'll be with me, Tom, won't you?"

"I'll have the honour and the pleasure," replied Tom.

"And you'll make one among us, Curnel? I have some good stuff. You wouldn't find a headache in a hogshead of it. You'll come, Curnel?"

"I will."

"We'll be pleasant as pleasant can be, Curnel. And now we're off to Joe Darmody's."

The three worthies set out together. Ned Culkin was obliged to cling to the Half-pay for support; Tom O'Loughlin cringed and sidled beside them.

There was a kind of wooden screen at the end of Joe Darmody's counter; behind this Ned Culkin led the way. The brandy bottle was brought down to the three friends. Ned Culkin swallowed glass after glass until his "shivering of could" not only left him, but he became brisk, pert, and nimble. Tom O'Loughlin waxed more oleaginous of deport-

ment every moment. And the Half-pay stared the more intently at every one until the bottle was emptied.

Ned Culkin never paid for the brandy at Joe Darmody's. Why he did not, Joe Darmody and he knew best.

CHAPTER XVI.

"LOVE IN A COTTAGE."

FOR a year and eleven months—Michael Hanrahan was very precise as to the lapse of time, sore cause had he to remember that same—for a year and eleven months after the arrival of "the posy" at the Cottage near the Cascades, Michael Hanrahan was, to use his own words, "as happy a boy as walked undher the canopy of the sky."

And why should he not be happy? The elements of happiness were within him. To begin with his own immediate concerns; making all due allowance for the aberrations flesh is heir to, his life was a blameless life. His conscience might be said to hold almost a sinecure office. I might suppose that

his conscience smiled rather than frowned when Michael went astray in his prayers at night, and with a denunciation of himself, said : “ Bad manners to you, where are you galloping ? ” and paused, and began again. But there were no grounds of serious accusation after the day, so that Michael and his conscience were cordial bed-fellows ; and Michael’s monitor rather smoothed his pillow than otherwise.

Then, as to his mundane affairs. Was there not the blooming, wavy-haired Mary, with her everlasting smile, to meet him everywhere about the house, out in the fields, and on the mossy rock near the cascades ? Mary, pure of heart—and warm of heart too—made no concealment of her love for Michael Hanrahan. And if Michael Hanrahan did not love his Mary,—“ *nau bocklish !* ” as we say in Ireland.

“ When you’re in your coorting days,” said Michael, “ you’re like a bird in the spring o’ the year ; your heart is as light as a feather, and you’re ready to fly if you only had wings.”

Furthermore, Mary and Michael were gathering

feathers to feather their nest. Mary was saving her wages, and Michael was adding to the store, and Mary was cash-keeper to the firm. So that, if we go no farther than his personal concerns lead us, why should not Michael Hanrahan be "as happy a boy as walked under the canopy of the sky?"

The least selfish of mortals, however, was Michael Hanrahan. But, to say nothing at all of the good terms between his conscience and himself, or of Mary's smile, and Mary's love, was not everything going on in the cottage, like as if "twas in Paradise they were living?"

There was Richard O'Meara, attending to his business every day from breakfast to dinner, as steady as a rock.

At this point Michael put on a face half grave, half cynical.

"Between you and I," he said, "'turney's work isn't the luckiest. When they set two people slapping at each other on what they call 'the green cloth,' but which is a dirty deal table, without a

scrap of cloth on it of any colour, they put me in mind of the 'handlers' of cocks in a cockpit. 'Tisn't out of liking for the foolish, quarrelsome birds that they spur them, and cut their combs and gills, and clip their feathers, and make 'em fly at each other. And whatever way the battle goes, both of the cocks get clipped when 'tis over. Not to run away with the story, howsomever, Masther Dick wasn't a downright hawk of an attorney, like some that pluck the feathers out of every bird they catch or lay fingers on. He knew there couldn't be two heads or two harps on a halfpenny, and he didn't tell people they were right when he knew they were wrong."

And notwithstanding the "'turney's work," matters went on swimmingly at the cottage. "Just as well as if Masther Dick was saying the litanies all day long in the office, by no manner of means likely to be."

The joint description by Michael and by Mary of this period of Richard O'Meara's wedded life was specially minute. Both of them dwelt on the occur-

rences of those halcyon days with a liking for the subject.

Almost invariably, Richard O'Meara was summoned to his dinner by "the posy" in person. She taps ever so gently against the glass of the office window, and with "a beck, and nod, and wreathed smile," invites him to join her. Whatever he is engaged on, is at once thrown aside, and almost instantly all trace of business gravity is left behind at the office desk, the arm of the invited is round his wife's waist, and they proceed together to the front of the cottage. On their way there is much chattering, and the voices are mirthful in their mingling.

Nothing at all has happened to baby. Never—no, never—never was young mother blessed with such a darling, sweet, good-tempered little baby. And he is growing handsomer every hour; he will be just such a fine fellow as his father, if God spares him to them. And, oh! may He in his love and mercy guard it!

Oh, yes! the Colonel *has* been in to pay his

daily visit. Yes, and he said, "Maw—maw,—Ma—dame!" when he came, and "Maw—maw, Ma—dame!" again at his departure. Not one other word did he utter, though he remained half an hour; and he never removed his eyes from the baby but once while he remained! It was very plain he was fond of it,—but who *could* see the darling, lovely little fellow without loving him?

And when Mary, and baby, and baby's mother had gone out for their walk, they had had their wonted three or four more salutations from the dear old Colonel, as usual, at different points on their route. And, oh! never did anything agree with baby like the fresh air from the water. It was a real pleasure to look at his lovely little face coming back, rosy as a peach-apple, and fresh as a rosebud! etcetera, etcetera.

And, arrived at the cottage-door, the two go upstairs to take a peep at the same all-important little being in his crib. With cautious, noiseless tread they approached the little sleeper. He is always comfortably asleep at this hour; and Mary stitching

away very industriously while sitting by his cot, and of course smiling as usual, although no one is there to smile at. The big, stalwart man must kneel down, or he cannot reach the baby's face with his lips. The mother leans over his shoulder as he stoops, and she whispers softly in his ear, and he looks up at her, and returns her smile, and nods his head in approval of what she has said.

Arm-in-arm they descend to the dining-room. Michael is at the door, bowing and waving his napkin to them in token of welcome. Nimbly and officiously Michael places the "posy's" chair, and Richard O'Meara and his young wife smilingly seat themselves; and gaily and pleasantly the meal proceeds, Ellen laughing cheerily at her husband's sallies. Michael, looking from one to the other with the fulness of his heart in his eyes, now and again puts in his word. Most often he says affectedly foolish things, for the purpose of exciting risibility at his own expense; and his foster-brother and foster-sister-in-law (if such a relationship can be admitted) enjoy his harmless

knavery, the drift of which is evident enough to both of them.

The table is cleared ; the decanters and fruit are placed upon it ; Richard O'Meara moves his chair round to his wife's side, and they clink glasses gaily to drink the health of the young Richard. And Michael Hanrahan, according to usage duly established, holds out *his* glass to have it filled,—and filled it is to overflowing ; and Michael throws back his head, looking directly upward, and presents the bottom of his glass to the ceiling, leaving no sign of heeltap as he pledges the toast.

Lo and behold !—the door opens, and in comes Mary dandling *young* Richard O'Meara. A brisk, bright little fellow he is. Richard O'Meara the younger is eight months old or so. A fine child of his age he is. He sits up very stout in his nurse's arms. Michael walks backwards and chirps for him and for Mary ;—the chirp is intended for both. One look at Michael's capacious mouth, now puckered up most curiously, suffices for the younker. Richard

the younger is otherwise attracted by his mother's gentle call. His eye, directed by the sound, recognizes the features that even a baby so soon learns to distinguish. With outstretched arms he utters forth with his baby supplication ; with outstretched arms his mother receives him, and baby Richard rests supremely happy in his mother's tender embrace. The little note of pleasure uttered by that tiny atom of humanity is heard by the mother's heart, and a tear, not of sorrow, but of ineffable love, falls on the blooming face over which she bends so fondly.

Stretched at full length on his mother's lap, gazing up at her he is, when Richard the elder comes to look down on him. Richard the younger, although he knows as much as any child of his age that was ever born, has not yet learnt the unit table. Yet, without being able to reckon one, two, he perceives that a second face has been placed close to that of his mother, and if he is not much mistaken he has seen that second face before. Yes, yes, he remembers it ! and he crows his pleasure at the reminiscence.

"Take your boy, Richard," Ellen says.

"Put the rascal here, Ellen," answers Richard, stretching out his brawny arms to receive his offspring. So on the arms of the father the crowing boy is laid. Richard the younger is highly gratified at his new position. The see-saw motion comes up to his idea of luxury, as Richard the elder paces up and down with him, moving his burthen to and fro, humming softly for his special delectation; and the laughing boy crows up his answer gleefully.

It is a picture to see the young wife, with both her hands clasped together as if in prayer,—and who knows but that it is in prayer?—and her rounded chin resting on those clasped hands, as she follows with her eyes of love the motions of the two beings she so doats upon.

After a little, Richard O'Meara and his wife, and Mary carrying baby, and Teague,—Michael stays at home to prepare tea,—set out for a ramble. Tea over, some time later, Richard O'Meara sips his glass of whisky-toddy; and shortly after, the whole

household is at rest, except Teague, who by night is the vigilant warder of the cottage and its inmates.

“As happy as if ’twas in paradise they were living,” quoth honest Michael.

CHAPTER XVII.

MICHAEL'S GATHERING GRIEFS.

MICHAEL HANRAHAN was, as I have stated, very certain that up to, and including the term of one year and eleven months after the marriage of his foster-brother, matters went on at the cottage pretty much as particularized in the last Chapter. That period had scarcely gone by, however, when symptoms of a change were noticed by the anxious and watchful Michael; premonitions that caused him to apprehend the return of Richard O'Meara to his former baneful habits: and Michael's heart was sore and heavy with forebodings of evil.

In the fourteenth month after his birth, it came to pass that Richard O'Meara the younger was

affected with some infantine ailment. His mother could not be convinced but that, if she ceased to watch him by day and by night, his loss would be the consequence; and during this period her husband, left alone after dinner, sauntered now and again into "The Town of the Cascades," and my friend Michael noticed with dire alarm, that on returning from these visits he used to come home, to use Michael's own phrase "a little riz" (an abbreviation of risen or raised, and meaning "elevated," or "tipsy").

The interview on the bridge between "the decayed gentleman" and the Half-pay, noticed in a former Chapter, will here be recalled. It will be remembered, too, that on this occasion, when Tom O'Loughlin had enlightened the Half-pay as to the mystery of the signal knocks and the rolling of the twenty-four-pound ball over the wooden bridge, he spoke in highly eulogistic terms of Richard O'Meara's boon companionship, and expressed his friendly and disinterested gratification to find that the object of this panegyric showed laudable symptoms of eman-

cipating himself from the thralldom to which he had for a time so lamentably subserved.

It was in company with Tom O'Loughlin and the Half-pay, and Ned Culkin and some others, that Richard O'Meara had become "a little riz" on the occasions so sorrowfully noticed by Michael Hanrahan.

Richard O'Meara the younger recovered in time from his attack of—whatever it may have been;—and it was the opinion of the household that he must have been laid up with the malady to which the youthful only are subject, and known only as "growing pains," so marvellously had the boy's stature increased during his illness. It would appear also, that while he lay confined to his cot, his frame had become, as it were, solidified, and thereby more capable of retaining the impressions made upon it. For he had become wonderfully acute in his perceptions, and active with his reasoning powers. He could reckon heads, and divide the aggregate into units, and separately recognize each unit. He could distinguish Michael Hanrahan's face from Teague's

face ; and to all appearance he considered the comeliness on the dog's side, when exercising his new faculty of comparison, for he smiled at Teague more rapturously than at Michael. He knew perfectly — but this was no new knowledge — that his father was not his mother ; and as for Mary, his nurse, he would indeed have belied the high estimate in which he was held, could he for an instant fail as to the individuality of her never-fading smile.

In the evenings, after dinner, Richard O'Meara the elder again became the playfellow and nurse of this marvellous child. In a round, mellow voice he often sang for him, while tossing him upwards—

“Look at the baby on the wall ;
Look at the baby dancing !
Look at the baby, one and all ;
Look at the baby prancing !”

Michael Hanrahan danced to this ditty, nearly shaking his head off as he bounced about, snapping his forefinger and thumbs together. And Mary waved her hands and smiled at the delighted aero-

naut ; while Ellen, the mother, in her own quiet way, looked on delighted.

But although Michael Hanrahan joined in the evening festivities at the cottage, he was oppressed by sad misgivings. He did not fail to mark that Richard O'Meara drank deeper than he had done since his marriage. That the reformation which by the direct agency of "the posy" he had reckoned on, was becoming doubtful. And Michael noted with sorrow that Richard O'Meara's visits to the town on business, were more frequent than need be ; that the latest visit was the longest, and that the longer the visit, the more "riz" was he when he came home.

Michael Hanrahan, for good reasons of his own, had no relish for the great exuberancy of spirits his foster-brother brought back with him after these, his business visits. The jollity of manner was too extravagant to please Michael ; the laughter was too loud, and too often unmeaning in its purpose. Swagger, jollity, pointless boisterous laughter, all

were evidences to Michael that his foster-brother had come home "riz."

Michael Hanrahan had such thorough reliance on the affection and fidelity of Mary that, as he declared to me, "he didn't care to the value of an ould cronny-bean halfpenny if an out-an'-out dandy came from Dublin-town to make sheep's eyes at her."

And furthermore, he declared "that,"—figuratively personifying himself as a cock—" 'twouldn't ruffle a feather of my top-knot if the smoothest of them peelers that have nothing to do but to beguile the cuntry-girls" laid his snares for her.

No, it was not at the prompting of the "green-eyed monster," jealousy, that Michael felt sickly at heart when his foster-brother chucked Mary under the chin and called her "a plump pullet." No, but Michael understood by the rakish, rollicking manner in which the chucking was performed that his foster-brother was impelled to such freedom in consequence of being "riz."

And when Richard O'Meara came home "riz,"

Michael was far from approving of his altered manner to "the posy." There was more of ardour, less of delicacy in it. Humble and untutored as Michael was, he possessed a natural refinement of feeling which enabled him to perceive the difference of accost to "the posy" by the same man when sober and when "riz." And perhaps of all the symptoms of returning bad habit, the last mentioned aroused Michael's greatest apprehension, and gave him most pain.

"She'd often hang her head and look down," said Michael, "like the primrose the sun would shine too bowld on."

There was, and mayhap there still is, within view and sound of the river cascades, a moss-covered rock with an ancient hawthorn rising canopy-like above it. I will name this the trysting-rock of my narrative.

Whenever Mary wished to hold conference with Michael, and that Michael was not within doors,—or *vice versâ*, to this mossy rock near the cascades, either went to seek the other, and seldom or never

was the seeker disappointed by finding the trysting-rock untenanted.

Of a certain evening, Michael, anxious to confide to Mary's sympathizing bosom his fears and his anxieties, and to consult her on a sagacious plan he had devised, went forth, and, as he had expected, he found Mary.

As he came within view of the trysting-rock and of Mary, Michael paused a moment to enjoy the pastime that was going on.

Richard O'Meara, junior, was by this time not altogether dependent on others for locomotion, and Mary was engaged, snatching up her charge, racing with him to some distance from the rock, placing him on his feet, scampering back and reseating herself, and then with outspread hands and voice enticing the young pedestrian to her. Michael Hanrahan forgot his griefs for the moment as he heard the child's shout of rapture, and observed with what desperate resolution of purpose the delighted pupil dashed towards his preceptress, and flung himself into her arms.

"Again to it, Mary," shouted Michael. And again the boy was placed at a further distance from the rock, and again the race to Mary was achieved gloriously. And again, and again, and again, and again, and again, before Michael caught him up and kissed him. Then placing the beautiful boy on Mary's knee Michael sat beside her. Richard O'Meara, junior, was a safe confidant at nearly every meeting between Mary and Michael, for although he could lisp a few words, his vocabulary was not sufficiently extensive to enable him to tell tales.

"Mary," said Michael, "I'm come to tell you my griefs. Oh, Mary! Mary!—'tis going back again to his bad life, he is."

"Ah! Michael—'twould be the sore pity. I have my hopes, Michael, and my trust in heaven, that he'll think of himself an' stop short."

"I'd give up anything in the world, barring your own self, Mary, that your eyes could see clearer than mine. But I have a knowledge of him since we were boys together. 'Twas never half-an'-half

with Dick O'Meara. 'Twas neck-or-nothing with him ever and always, and he won't stop."

"More's the pity, Michael, more is the pity. But don't give up, he'll mend—he'll mend yet, with heaven's help."

"If 'twas only myself that was to rue it, Mary, —though I can't help having the love at my heart for him,—it wouldn't be of so much matter. But our beautiful posy, Mary ;—if through his wickedness that creature's heart is saddened—and though she doesn't complain, she isn't the pleasant bird she was, I can tell you—"

"She is not, indeed, Michael ; thrue for you—!"

"If through his wickedness then he brings grief upon our posy,—he'll suffer for it. And—and—that he may—!"

"Michael ! You wouldn't offer up that prayer?"

"No, no ; I believe not. But if he hurts our posy, he'll suffer for it without my prayer. Be you sure of that."

"The Lord guide an' purtect us, and turn him back into the right road !"

"Amen to that, Mary. Amen!"

"Michael—?"

"Well, Mary."

"Couldn't anything be done to cure him?"

"You remind me of it, Mary. I have a plan in my own head, and I want to take counsel with you."

"What is your plan, Michael?"

"One plan I'll work out first. I'll do my endeavours to stop his dhrinking at home at any rate."

"How will you bring that about?"

"I'll tell you. I'll keep the liquor from him!"

"If you could do *that*, Michael, 'twould be the charity!"

"You'll see that I will. And this very night I'll begin. He's gone into the town, but he'll get no liquor when he comes back. Mary—"

"Well, Michael?"

"'Tis the Devil that brews the dhrink. An' if he doesn't do it with his own two claws, he's standing by present when it's made."

"Indeed 'tis likely."

"'Tis the down thruth, Mary. May my bitter curse light upon it for the liquor !"

Strengthened by Mary's hearty approval of his plans for restricting Richard O'Meara in the home-allowance of liquor, Michael arranged, with her assistance, the details of his operations, and then the two went home together. .

But honest Michael's devices were seldom successful in their issue, and although Mary regarded him as a Solomon, and endorsed his sagacious contrivances, it will be seen that in more instances than the present their consultations and joint arrangements tended to little good.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW MICHAEL'S PLAN SUCCEEDED.

UP to the period at which this Chapter opens, Richard O'Meara had always returned early from his evening visits to "The Town of the Cascades." On the occasion now to be noticed, two hours of the night had passed ere he opened the wicket leading into his flower-garden. He was heard, in his approach to the cottage, singing at the top of his voice, and this until he reached its very door. There, under the projecting porch, stood his wife, with her gentle greeting,—

"Welcome home to me, Richard."

His reply was cordial, but it was boisterous and unsuitable.

"Ellen, my queen of roses, is that you? If I am not proud to meet you, Ellen, my beauty, may I be a bornoch! . If I'm not proud to see you, may Richard O'Meara be a bornoch! Ha, ha, ha!"

And his laugh at the excellence of his conceit was as loud as the roar of the cascades.

"Only think now, of Richard O'Meara—that—stands two feet six—in his leather—changed into a bornoch!—living under—a shell—not one inch across!—sticking fast—to the rocks—down in—the bay!—Well!—upon my soul—'tis sublime to imagine it—isn't it, Ellen?"

Richard O'Meara's stentorian laughter had several times interrupted his words, and now he bent backwards to give full vent to his uproarious mirth.

"Isn't it sublime, Ellen?"

"It would be a great change indeed, Richard."

"But you don't seem to enjoy it, Ellen?"

"Indeed I do, Richard dear," and she essayed to mingle her little silvery tinkle with her husband's noisy explosion.

“Upon my soul it *would* be a change, as you call it; no doubt about it.”

Here his face and his voice became serious.

“There would be an advantage, however. Those damned rascals with their parchments and their diablerie, couldn’t get at me. Ha, ha, ha! I’d defy them to creep under my shell. They couldn’t, they couldn’t,—and, deuce mend them, the litigious scoundrels that keep a pleasant fellow with his nose rubbing against his desk all day—till it gets sharp and vixenish.”

Again his loud merriment gave place to gravity.

“In the domestic privacy of a bornoch,” he said, “there is an advantage, surely. And I suppose he has plenty of time, and some to spare for cogitation and calculation. Ay, that may be,—he is a hermit,—a bornoch is. And he leads a virtuous, abstemious, and inoffensive life. He does, no doubt.—But,” and his ringing laughter returned, while he shook his wife’s hands so violently that she winced,—“but for all that—devil’s in me if Richard O’Meara would change with him. He hasn’t a wife

like mine—nor a wife at all—the stupid wretch!—There wouldn't be room for a wife in the bornoch's shell. And, furthermore, Richard O'Meara wouldn't—exchange—his beef,—and his mutton,—and his ham and turkey,—and his potteen-punch,—for the philosophic bornoch's breakfast,—lunch,—dinner,—supper,—and lush,—of salt water—salt water,—from one end of the year to the other. No—no!—the life of a bornoch is not like my life, Ellen, my queen!"

"Dear Richard, will you not come in?"

"Come in? To be sure I will. 'Tisn't a bornoch's roof that's over us, Ellen,—no,—no!"

And, snatching his wife up in his arms, he raced in with her, shoved the parlour door open with his shoulder, placed her sitting on the sofa, retreated a few steps, and stood looking on her admiringly, while his laughter filled the room.

The door opened, and Mary Malone entered, bearing the child in her arms. Richard the younger was in his night-dress; he had been roused from his sleep by his father's boisterousness, and, notwith-

standing Mary's dissuasion, conveyed distinctly in his own baby-language, he would partake of the merriment he understood to be going on.

Richard O'Meara turned, and snatched his son from the nurse's arms.

"Mary," he said, "you're as blooming as ever, and as smiling as ever," and he pinched Mary's fresh cheek. Michael was looking on, and, in the sense before explained, he felt the pinch upon Mary's cheek like a heavy blow inflicted on himself.

"Where is my foster-brother Michael?"

The questioner followed Mary's eye.

"Ay, ay; I see the rogue. Take off that glum phiz, my honest fellow, and look as a chap in his courting days ought to look. Mary, you and Michael here shall be flesh of one flesh before this day month, whether you consent or not. Ellen—"

"Well, Richard?"

"What are we to make of this rascal—this boy of ours!"

"I leave that entirely to you, Richard."

"Well—let me see. 'Tis a serious consideration, Ellen. Look at me, Dick, straight in the face, like a man. Ay, that will do. An attorney you shan't be; they're half shark, half mole, every man of them,—your father included. You look too jovial to be made a judge of, Dick, you do. I don't think you're sanctimonious, no more than your father, so you are unfit to be a bishop. You'll be a stout fellow, Dick, six feet two, like your sire; there's fire in your eye, my boy, so I think—we'll make a general of you. You hear that, Ellen? Yes, a general, nothing else. Come, General, mount your charger!"

He raised the little fellow so incautiously that Ellen, pale and trembling, found it difficult to suppress a scream. Mary's arms were involuntarily stretched out to reclaim him, and Michael wrung his hands. But the General himself felt no alarm. His legs were placed over the shoulders of the charger, who grasped them in front, and the bold equestrian steadied his seat by clutching in both hands his father's clustering hair.

“Right,—right, General! Hold on to the mane stoutly—we are about to charge at the head of the cavalry. Out of the way, there, or we’ll ride you down and sabre you! Charge!”

Away went the charger, at full gallop, round and round the room, the General shouting on his shoulders. And round and round they went, until the heads of the anxious lookers-on were dizzy. Then came a sudden pause.

“Your charger requires to be watered, General, or he’ll never be able to break through the enemy’s flank.”

He turned to the sideboard.

“Hallo! Commissary Michael!” he cried, “what has become of the decanters? Bring in the decanters, like a gay, honest fellow.”

And he sang,—

“Fill the bumper fair;
Every drop we sprinkle
O’er the brow of care,
Smooths away a wrinkle.”

“Come, Michael, ‘fill the bumper fair’ for the

General's charger. The water is here—off with you for the other ingredient!"

Michael came shuffling forward, endeavouring to put on the sheepish look he could assume on occasion. But there was a nervous quivering about his lips, and an anxiety mingled with alarm in his eye, that both operated to spoil the signification of vacant simplicity it was his wish to index. Michael was now about to try the well-meant experiment agreed on between himself and Mary, the plan so excellently devised, and so sure to be effective. But the excited state in which he saw his foster-brother, raised his apprehension that the essay would not be altogether so practicable as he had decided it to be. He feared he was now venturing on very dangerous ground. Yet his purpose was laudable, and he would proceed. Very skilfully, as he supposed, did he begin his manœuvres.

"Sure, Masther Dick, the General, as you christened him, God bless him! is dhragging at your poor head enough to tire you out. And, General, I'm thinking you ought to dismount from your

grand charger, and shut your peepers. It's time we were all mounting, and getting into our beds, snug and cosy. The misthress, the crature, is lost with the sleep, I know."

Michael bobbed his head, and winked both his eyes at the mistress, to intimate that she ought to confirm his assertion. But she was silent.

"Afther your dancing and galloping undher the General, Masther Dick," he went on, "you must be mortial tired, and you must want to stretch your bones sadly. And so, in heaven's name—"

"Ay, and so in heaven's name, as you say, Michael, I must have my lush before I go. I am as thirsty as—"

"A lime-burner,—he ! he ! he !" put in Michael.

"The aggregate thirst of forty lime-burners, and forty smiths, and forty glass-blowers, would not reach the thirst of the single individual that is panting for his lush. Off with you, man, if you don't want to see me shrivel up before your eyes, like scorched parchment."

Michael, giggling as he went, raced out. In a

very short time he returned, holding a decanter by the neck, between the first and second finger of his right hand. This he deposited on the sideboard. It would have been difficult for you, even had you been present, to understand the half-terrified, half-simulated simplicity of his more than usually pallid face, as he awaited the result of his proceeding.

"Come, General," said Richard O'Meara gaily, "when we have had our drink, we'll dash through the bayonets of the enemy and gain the day. Hold on hard by the mane, General, while I mix my jorum. The veriest coward is a hero, General, with good liquor under his sword-belt, as we'll prove to the enemy. Eh?—what's this?"

While speaking in this gleeish strain, Richard O'Meara had been engaged pouring water into his glass, and then having leant the decanter to pour in the whiskey—lo! no whisky came forth. Richard, as yet unsuspecting of Michael's drift, handed him back the decanter, with—

"You've made a grand mistake here, my honest fellow. Take this back to the cellar, and insert

into the orifice of the soulless vessel the nose of the cock of Darby Kenealy's keg of potteen, and let the sparkling beverage flow in until it gurgles small when reaching the neck. Your mistake has been a d—d annoyance, I can tell you. Besides the blank disappointment, just as the cup was about being carried to the lip, you give the enemy time to rally, and so may cause the General to lose his battle. Be off and bring the decanter brimful."

"Masther Dick——"

"Well, Master Michael?"

"We're like the strand of the bay when the tide is out."

"How like the strand of the bay when the tide is out?"

"We're run drhy like the strand,—he! he! he!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Our potteen—he! he! he! is run out, and so we have the drhy strand,—he! he! he! There isn't as much in the house as would fill a two-year-old child's thimble—he!—he!—h-e-e!"

The last attempt at a giggle was a failure as

expressive of mirth. The he—he—h-e-e! was plaintive and quavering, and from poor Michael's perturbed lips sounded more like a wail than a laugh. And little wonder; for Michael saw that his foster-brother's brows were knit close together, and that the eyes flashing from beneath their lowering clouds flashed no sunlight, but the intense glare that foreboded a storm. He had seen the same murky light in those eyes before.

"Hah—hah—hah!"

And to Michael's ears his foster-brother's scoffing laughter was terrible.

"Come, sir!" he cried suddenly, in a loud, angry voice, and he made a stride towards Michael. The movement was so rapid, and so unexpected, that the tiny General, taken unawares, tumbled headlong from his saddle. The mother uttered a sharp scream, Mary endeavoured to grasp her charge, and Michael, momentarily remorseful for having roused a temper hitherto latent, wailed and twisted his fingers together. The father seized his son before he reached the ground, but that so roughly, that

the little fellow, unsoldierlike though it was, bel-
lowed with all his might.

The loud voice of the Goliath of the scene, the mother's screams, Mary's exclamations, Michael's remorseful groans, and the small General's cry of terror, produced in the apartment a noise nothing short of tumult.

Richard O'Meara's moody eyes turned from one to the other.

"Here, girl," he said; "take this brat from me and remove him."

Mary clasped her nursling to her bosom, and nestling there he became still, stealing looks now and again at his father's altered face, and hiding to escape the impression it produced on him.

"And now, Sir," said Richard O'Meara, seizing Michael by the collar, and shaking him as if he were a reed, "why have you dared to practise your ill-performed buffoonery on me? Why, under cover of such assumed tom-foolery, have you dared to insinuate that I have drunk too much?"

"Masther Dick, indeed I didn't—"

“ You lying whelp !—you did so insinuate. Dare you say it now openly, sirrah, without personating the folly that does not belong to you? Dare you say openly—that I am—drunk? Answer me, cur? Am I drunk?—am I?—answer me !”

At each question Michael was shaken violently by the strong arm that held him. It was with difficulty he could gasp out his reply.

“ Masther—Dick !—you are—not a — down-right—drunken man—but—”

“ But what?—finish your sentence. But what?”

“ If you take—more—you will—disgrace us all !
—If you take more—you will—be—drunk !”

“ Hah ! By——”

And the room was filled with the boisterous oath which I will not record.

“ ——You are a virulent, slandering cur. Were I even to drink until my head burst open, how comes it that such as you should attempt to control me? By ——,” and the oath was repeated, “ I will dislocate every joint in your body before I stop.”

At this mad moment, when the infuriated man seemed blindly intent on the execution of his threat, two little hands clasped his arm. He started, and looked down at his wife's pale, beseeching face.

"My beloved Richard!" she softly said.

The voice appealed to his heart, if not to his reason. There was a hush of the storm; the strong grasp relaxed, and Michael freed himself and retreated to a little distance.

"Was it with your consent, Ellen, that this paltry, presumptuous trick was practised on me?"

"Upon my honour, no, dearest Richard!"

"I believe you. Then sit down, Ellen, and do not interfere. Go you, sirrah, fill up that decanter, and bring it hither instantly. Else I will so chastise you that your nearest of kin will not recognize you."

"Go, Michael, go!" added the wife.

Michael's pale face turned yet paler, but he replied, calmly and deliberately,

"Do as you say, Masther Dick, do, if it pleasures you. 'Twill be no hard task for you to

work out your threatenings. You are a tall and powerful man, and I am a small and delicate one. Your arm is strong and heavy, while mine is puny and weak. If you will chastise me as you say, little chance have I to make head against you. And—now that I see—you're fixed on your own destruction, 'tis little matter to me if you stretched me at your feet this moment a corpse. Do, use your strength upon me. But, come what may, I'll give no helping hand to your downfall. I'll not be the one to hand you poison. Not I, Masther Dick, not I. Not if you struck me with your heavy hand until the life left me!"

The last words of this long protest were scarcely audible, for Michael's voice trembled. He burst into tears, and covering his face with both his hands, he sobbed convulsively.

Michael's temperament was feminine. He lacked the bodily nerve that urges to pugnacity, but he possessed the moral courage to do without wincing what he considered right.

His words, the manner of their delivery, and the

tender, womanlike affection they displayed, had a powerful effect on Richard O'Meara. He looked on the poor fellow remorsefully,—his eyes softened. Mary thought this a favourable opportunity to lead Michael away. Before this, however, she whispered to her mistress, and Ellen spoke up whisperingly to her husband. Mary had slipped out, filled the decanter, and placed it on the side-board. And so ended the notable plan that Michael and Mary had so hopefully devised.

As, arm-in-arm, they passed into the hall, some one retreated before them. It was Nora Spruhan, who had been a listener to the contention within.

Nora paused in the centre of the hall, and addressed Michael and Mary.

"The day of reckoning for me is nigh at hand," she said. And then she turned swiftly down the passage leading to the kitchen.

"Lord help us!—'tis likely to be coming," Michael groaned as he looked after the girl.

CHAPTER XIX.

SUITE.

AND did Richard O'Meara allow the kindly feelings natural to him full scope, when the outburst of passion resulting from partial excess had subsided?

No.

Silently and gloomily he sat him down, and leaned his head upon his hand. There was a self-accuser within him, and the mirror that was held before his mind's eye was irksome to look in.

So, to escape the self-reproach he felt, he grasped the liquor Mary had brought in, and he drank—and drank—and drank.

After a while he desired his wife to leave him. Too much terrified by what she had witnessed

to think of refusing, she obeyed without expostulation.

And there Richard O'Meara remained until the whisky he had been supplied with was exhausted.

After a short, feverish sleep, he arose betimes, but with an aching head and nervous hand. He repaired to his office at an early hour, and there affected to be occupied. This, however, was mere affectation; he was unfit for the simplest details of business. He awaited his wife's summons to breakfast, and this he instantly obeyed.

"Ellen, dear Ellen," he supplicated, "can you forgive me? I have outraged and insulted you, my wife;—will you pardon me?"

"Pardon you, dearest Richard?—Oh, yes!—You were not unkind to me during your temporary forgetfulness."

"I thank you, Ellen,—I thank you. But to this poor fellow I *have* been unkind—and cruel. One moment, Ellen, one moment."

Michael was standing in the hall, looking sad and dejected, as his foster-brother entered with "the

posy." Richard O'Meara went over to him. He took one of Michael's hands in his, and laid the other on his shoulder, as he stooped down to whisper in his ear.

"Michael," he said, "I ask your forgiveness. It is the last time you shall see me so affected, Michael—the last time."

"From the bottom of my heart I pray," answered Michael, "that it may be the last time. Masther Dick, ask of God on high that he may give you his holy grace to enable you to keep your word."

* * * * *

"Michael was of opinion," said Mary Hanrahan to me, "that Richard O'Meara did not pray for grace. For Michael says, if grace be prayed for, grace will be given. An' I agree with Michael," added Mary.

I will close this short Chapter by saying, that the creed of Michael and Mary is my creed also.

CHAPTER XX.

ANOTHER SHORT CHAPTER. MICHAEL'S SIMILE OF THE BLUE-BOTTLE, AND MICHAEL'S IMITATION OF FATHER MATHEW.

It is not my intention to follow Richard O'Meara step by step as he was led on by the Achates of "The Town of the Cascades." From the lengthened details given me by Michael and Mary, and derived from other sources too, I will select a few remarkable occurrences that stand prominently forward.

For a time Richard O'Meara fulfilled the promise he had made to Michael. He remained at home in the evenings, and did not visit the town, and he endeavoured to fix himself steadily to business. He was moderate too in his libations, and forced himself

to be content with the "allowance," as Michael named it, put into the decanter each evening.

But the cheerful buoyancy of his spirits was damped by the constraint to which he endeavoured to submit. Gradually his efforts relaxed, and on—on he went again in his ruinous progress.

"He reminded me at that time," said Michael, "of a big blue fly that's caught in a spider's web. He wrangled hard to get free, and then he stopped in his wrangling. And then he wrangled again, and stopped again;—and stopped, and wrangled, and stopped, and wrangled. Every time he stopped and began again, his fluttering and kicking and buzzing was weaker, and weaker,—until he gave up entirely. And if you will only say to yourself that the crawling, ill-looking spider that crept out and dragged him away was the evil sperrit that pours out the liquor for people, you'll have exactly my notion of the poor fellow's fate.

"You may take my word for it," Michael continued when he had paused after the sententious delivery of his apt, though not elegant simile—

"You may take my word for it, that what I heard Father Mathew saying (the Heavens be his bed) in the chapel beyond, is all as one as gospel thruth."

Here Michael threw himself into an oratorical attitude, and modified his features to represent Father Mathew's peculiar bland benevolence of smile. It was a caricature likeness he produced no doubt, yet Michael's face was benevolent in its way. And although no two faces could be more dissimilar than those of Michael Hanrahan and the apostle of temperance,—the former being remarkable for nondescript irregularity, the other for classic contour,—there was as near an approach to likeness of expression as could be effected. Michael's style bore evidence that his was a very free translation of the original text. As it was, I quote verbatim.

"My dear friends" (says Father Mathew), "there is nothing at all at all to stand for the poor sowl, God help it, that's given to the liquor, but to put the sign of the cross on its forehead, as a threshold betwixt itself and the Devil,—a threshold across which the ould lad darn't put his hoof, or so

much as the tip of his claw. And then let it turn its back upon the dhrink teetumtotally, and never let it scald its tongue again."

Which, to my mind, is good, sound doctrine, however oddly paraphrased by Michael Hanrahan.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WIDOW-WOMAN'S PLACE OF "ENTERTAINMENT."

ON a certain evening, at the hour when night had begun to unfold her pall, and was gradually enveloping objects beneath its screen, the western edge thereof being gilt by the latest touch of the retiring sun, the Half-pay issued from his little shabby-genteel house, looked around him for a moment, sniffed the pleasant breeze with a relish, and then stumped down the descent towards the river.

Briskly and hastily the Half-pay pushed across the bridge. From the celerity and liveliness of his motions one would infer that he was bent on some important business; and I have full reason for

asserting that the interior merriment of which I have before spoken, circulated freely between his firmly closed lips and teeth,—significant that the object in view was “apples and nuts to him.”

Over the bridge he hastened, looking intently before him, glancing neither to the right nor left, not even beguiled into taking a passing view of the cascades. They might tumble upward for all he cared just then.

Off the bridge, into the main street he went. Across the street he hurried, and with a lively hop, and a flourish of his cudgel, he ascended a step at the threshold of a shop directly fronting him, and there entered. All alive and mettlesome he seemed to be.

Through the well-burnished windows of this shop, and so disposed on a shelf or counter within as to be seen at a glance, one caught sight of a pyramid of loaves of bread. Close to the bread was a cheese, with a wedge-shaped cut therein, proving the interior to be rich and crumbling. 'And on this cheese lay the instrument with which the incision

had been made, ready to say, "Cut and come again" when required.

In close neighbourhood with the cheese was a juicy round of beef; a great carving knife lay thereon, both able and willing, if set to work, to slice away manfully. Close by this again, was a boiled ham, partially incised, as the cheese was, and most enticing, to judge by the eye,—the lean so red and crisp, the fat so blanched and clarified. And there was a flitch of bacon, in a sitting posture, that looked down, one would think, affectionately on the partly excavated ham. Very probably this flitch of bacon, and its neighbour the ham, had, not very long ago, been united portions of some animal,—whilom lord and master of the cabin he dwelt in, little imagining the purpose for which he was so pampered and caressed, so well cared and housed.

Then there was a large wooden bowl to be seen, heaped up with eggs, beyond water-measure: there was a dish choke-full of small "prints of butter:" and there was also a large crock of the same edible pickled, the mouth of the crock turned streetwards

with a grooved wooden spatula plunged therein, prepared for action.

Somewhat in the rear of this surpassing fare, and modestly disclaiming "pride of place," stood a singed pig's head with very erect ears, and close thereto a heap of dingy-looking pigs' "pettitoes"—or "crubeens," in local parlance.

Immediately in contact with the window-panes was a castle formed of scalloped-edged biscuits. Hanging up, so as to catch the eye at once; there was a bundle of clay pipes, the bowls capped with tin covers, and these chained to the pipe-shanks. And there were "doodeens" manufactured by an artist in that line living in "The Town of the Cascades," these deserving special description. The heads of the "doodeens" then, were of mahogany, the bowls of tin, and the shanks of sweet woodbine. They were profusely ornamented with copper wire, and amateurs in smoking have told me that such doodeens surpass the costliest meerschaums.

As a final portion of the exhibition in the window, I have to notice six sad-looking pickled

herrings, erect, but leaning against the glass for support, and standing on the apex of their snouts. Were these lachrymose pickled herrings so placed for the purpose of contrasting with the more generous fare on view at the same time? So I at first supposed, but I was mistaken.

Over the door of this well-provisioned establishment was a sign-board bearing one significant word:—

“ENTERTAINMENT,”

—in large white letters on a black ground.

The well-cooked beefsteak or mutton-chop, with ceteras, and followed by bottled ale and whisky punch, could be very cosily served up in the little overfurnished, carpeted room up-stairs.

Rasher-and-egg eaters, or eaters of eggs alone, were generally satisfied to regale themselves at a table on which the kitchen fire shed its genial glow. While the bread and cheese and butter consumers, or the diners on a meagre pickled herring, were content with a seat in the common tap-room.

For one moment or so I must be allowed to take

a glance at the interior of the shop belonging to the house of "Entertainment."

At a few feet from the termination of the counter, which ran from the window almost to the wall opposite, an upright partition of boards projected, and this formed a screen, behind which the stealthy dram-drinker who had not "come to make a sitting of it," might "turn up his little finger" while hastily tossing off his glass of liquor. The counter was to the right as you entered the shop; to the left there were three capacious puncheons, light blue in colour, and marked No. 1, No. 2, No. 3; the number signifying a gradation of merit in the contents. On shelves behind the counter were ranged many light blue kegs. And below these, and opposite the screen, stood, each in a cell of its own, six squat, unusually corpulent, Dutch-built bottles.

These bottles were tightly corked, but through the cork of each a strong whipcord passed, which was fastened firmly round the bottle's neck. A smart pull at the string, and out came the cork in a jiffy, safely dangling, while the contents gurgled

forth. The familiars of the convenient screen averred, that all and every of the black bottles could speak one word of the Irish language as plainly as if they "had it in their throattles."

At the instant when the cork was snatched from the orifice it filled, and the neck of the bottle bent to the glass, the well-understood word "*Dhuich*!" was heard, plain as it could be uttered. And the translated meaning of the word "*Dhuich*!" is "drink!" used by the bottles in the imperative mood.

The willing obeyers of the mandate so enunciated, further affirmed, that each individual bottle issued its command in a tone peculiarly its own. Every hider behind the screen cultivated an intimacy with one or other of the bottles in preference to the rest. He could therefore decide, without probability of error, if the "*Dhuich*!" had come from his own favourite. He could not be imposed on by a stranger's voice, or beguiled to stimulate his palate with any but its accustomed stimulant.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "LONE ROOM."

WHEN the Half-pay had hopped into the house of "Entertainment," he performed an odd pirouette with his composite leg, punched it down thrice, as though to say emphatically, "We have arrived, my lad!" And then he brought his cudgel to present arms while he placed the edge of his left hand above the rim of his beaver. This accolade was given to a buxom, comely woman, who stood behind the counter. This woman might be forty, or thereabouts. She was Dutch-built, like her bottles; her eye was blue (sky-blue eyes are very general in and about "The Town of the Cascades");—no doubt but these blue-eyes had emitted ethereal rays when

their owner was in her maiden prime ;—their expression even now was not quite lost, but there was shrewdness superadded. Her plump cheeks were rosy ; their girlish peachiness had hardened though ; her hair was glistening auburn (such is also very general in the locality) ;—it was carefully curled about her face. She wore a gown of some dark colour ; a checked apron “from the fold” guarded this to the front ; a many-coloured silk kerchief enveloped her bust ; and she wore a cap with pink strings and a pink bow above the left ear. It was not a widow’s cap—no, no ; it was a kind of compromise cap, with quilling and lace in great abundance ; and this compromise cap was very becoming, the pink strings and bows taking from it all character of sombreness.

This tidy, pleasant-looking—but, at the same time “not-to-be-caught-with-chaff” person, was the “widow-woman” of the “Town of the Cascades”—the Half-pay’s widow-woman especially, as the reader will doubtless remember.

When the Half-pay saluted his old nurse, the

widow-woman held a small wooden instrument, with a slender neatly-turned handle, and an ornamental knob at the end,—not unlike, in fact, a royal sceptre as to shape and size. This sceptre was technically called a “muller,” and was used by the widow-woman to bruise the sugar against the bottom of the glass when she brewed a “tumbler of punch.” The expertness with which she twirled this muller between her fingers, proved indeed that “practice makes perfect.” It is certain that with it she could effect a thorough amalgamation of sugar and water in a battery of twelve or more “tumblers” placed in a row, in a twentieth of the time the same process would have demanded through the everyday agency of spoon or ladle. Scientific preparers of solutions would do well to take a hint from the widow-woman’s muller. It may give them a wrinkle worth knowing.

In answer to the Half-pay’s salute, the comely widow-woman jerked the handle of her muller between the first and second fingers of her right

hand, and twirling it upwards, placed it cross-wise above the jaunty pink bow that so expressively removed all idea of pining or sadness from the cap. Her look into the Half-pay's eyes was steady and unflinching as his own, but with her there was a jocularly in the eyes, and about the mouth, that imparted a piquancy to her return of the veteran's symbolic gallantry.

The Half-pay, after a due pause, lowered his cudgel and placed it, ever so gently, on the widow-woman's shoulder, while she also lowered her muller, brought its knob in contact with the counter, and leaned her palm on it.

"Any—one?" the Half-pay asked, jerking his head towards the end of the shop.

The widow-woman separated the fingers of her left hand and held four of them up to view. At the same time she bent the first joint of her thumb, and protruded the ball thereof, so as to produce an easily appreciable representation of a duck. She touched each upright finger separately, and then she

tapped the duck's head, and allowed the muller to rest upon it.

"Not come yet. Will *you*, Curnel?"

The Half-pay paused a moment, and his riveted look at her was not without humour. But you should have studied his face somewhat to discover it.

"I will."

"Then he's welcome. If not, home again in full trot," said the widow-woman.

Lest those who read this narrative should be perplexed by the conversation held partly in dumb show between the hostess of the house of "Entertainment" and her friend the Half-pay, I think a translation of her hieroglyphics necessary. When she touched her four upright fingers with her muller, she replied to the query "Any—one?" by telling the querist that four of his usual evening companions had reached the place of rendezvous. The duck formed by the contortion of her thumb, typified our acquaintance, Tom O'Loughlin, "the decayed gentleman." The symbol was not strictly accurate,

to be sure ; neither are those discovered on the walls of the pyramids, by the bedusted rummagers therein. There is a hard strain needed at times by the learned explorers, to bring the buckle and tongue of an interpretation in contact. And the widow-woman's symbol of Tom O'Loughlin was as apt as many.

"Tom O'Loughlin," she reasoned, "drinks as often as a duck. He eats, to be sure,—so do ducks—but with every morsel he must have a drink, just as ducks feed. His element is the fluid, not the solid, therefore when my thumb is modelled to represent a duck, it represents Tom O'Loughlin. It will be seen that the meaning of the widow-woman was evident to the Half-pay. The query verbally propounded while she held her muller on the duck's head, and thoroughly understood by the Half-pay, was,—

"Will *you* pay for the duck's drink, Curnel?"

The assent given by the Half-pay insured Tom O'Loughlin's admission, his score being already out of all proportion with his ability to expunge. For a

long time Tom had been inadmissible, except under the auspices of a guarantee. If such were not to be found, the poor drouthy Tom should waddle out of the shop, and creep back to his miserable little house to spend the hours intended by him to be added to the day, in solitary, pining thirstiness.

When the Half-pay had notified his intentions to be answerable for the "duck's" reckoning of the night, he punched off merrily in the direction towards which he had nodded.

At the end of the counter there was a side-door, the latch of which he raised, and descended three steps into a narrow, tortuous passage. This passage was dimly lighted by candles fixed in sconces here and there, to the walls. But the "darkness visible" of the crooked entry was sufficient for the Half-pay; he could have explored it blindfold, so often had he at nightfall traced its ups and downs, its twists and turns.

Finally he reached a door, which he opened by pressing a latch, and entered an apartment a good

way to the rear of the generally known portion of the house of "Entertainment." Here the Bacchanalians of the "Town of the Cascades," that is, of a certain grade, might congregate beyond the ken of prying Cynicism. Here the "honest, hearty, pleasant fellows," as they dubbed themselves, might pour their libations *ad libitum*, no one the wiser except the widow-woman and her "coy maiden." And the boisterousness that for the most part distinguished the prolonged orgies of this properly designated "lone room" might rise to any pitch of uproariousness, unheard by the passers in the street, or by the inhabitants of the neighbouring houses.

The "lone room" was homely in decoration and furniture. A plain deal table occupied the centre, with deal forms running parallel thereto on both sides, and a chair at either end. There was no fireplace; perhaps the deficiency was not without a purpose. On cold winter nights, heat was supplied internally by means of steaming alcoholic drink; the colder the weather, the greater the quantity required to raise the temperature of the guests. On

summer evenings, the cool atmosphere of the "lone room" absorbed the excess of caloric.

The whitewashed walls were relieved from their blankness by six prints, in frames covered with shining metal, imitative of gilding. These had been purchased by the widow-woman from a travelling pedlar, while the "lone room" was in process of remodelling. Glaring in colour the prints were, and just because they flashed gaudily upon the eye, admirably adapted, in the purchaser's estimation, to adorn the new apartment. Their fitness so far being admitted, their appropriateness in all other respects must be denied.

The three pendants against the right-hand wall, that is to the right as the Half-pay hopped in, were three saints,—not portraits, I venture to affirm, for they were scowling, sinister-looking saints. The three to the left were illustrative of the Scripture parable of the Prodigal Son. The saints were respectively attired in robes of the brightest red, the brightest blue, and the brightest yellow. The artist's idea seemed to be that saints should be

clothed in the most brilliant hues of the rainbow, referable, perhaps, to their state of beatitude. So far, his idea was carried out; in other respects I must say he failed to impart even a remote expression of sanctity—rather the contrary, I regret to admit.

The first of the series to the left, commemorative of the progress of the Prodigal Son, calls for a particular description, and which will give an idea of the others.

The youth was about to leave the paternal roof. The father was seated in a gorgeously carpeted room hung with family pictures in massive frames. There was a scarlet covered *settee*, not a downright modern lounge. The window-hangings were of brilliant red, fringed and tasselled. In bookcases were richly bound books, and amongst them, prominently in view, were the “Encyclopædia Britannica” in many volumes, the “Arabian Nights,” “Sir Charles Grandison,” and “The Sportsman’s Dictionary.” Altogether, the family pictures, the character of the furniture, etc., led the observer to understand that he looked into the apartment of an

English country gentleman of wealth and station, and the selection of the books notified that he was also a man of erudite habits becoming his years and position.

Early in the day the young adventurer was about to depart. This was evident from the fact of the father being yet in dishabille. He had not removed his elaborately figured dressing-gown; his many-buckled wig, indeed, was on his head, with the black silk appendage therefrom called a bag; his nether-man was clothed in tight-fitting pantaloons, and he wore red morocco slippers without heels. The prodigal's father, so depicted, was a stately, sage-looking English gentleman of sixty years back.

He sat at a small, diagonal table supported by a single pedestal. On this table a goodly pyramid of gold pieces was heaped up, and there was no doubt about their being, all of them, genuine British guineas, not long, apparently, from the mint,—certainly not in circulation at the commencement of the Christian era. These guineas had just been

counted down by the affluent head of the house, his fingers were in contact with the edge of the heap, and he was looking up soberly, and somewhat reprovingly at his son.

The youth stood close by the diagonal table, and his eyes were fixed longingly on the glittering portion he was about to receive. He was fully equipped for his journey, ready to pop into the saddle. He was bareheaded, as he should be in his father's presence; his hair, well powdered and pomatumed, was frizzed and buckled from his ears to his forehead, while a taper queue hung between his shoulders. His coat was of bright blue, ornamented down the front with two rows of gilt buttons; pantaloons must have been in vogue when the illustration was designed, for the young adventurer wore those nether garments, of a very positive yellow, in tasteful contrast with his scarlet waistcoat. A long watch-chain, with massive seals thereto, hung down his thigh, and on his legs were hessian-boots, with tassels to the front reaching half-way to the insteps. On his heels were crane-necked silver spurs; in his

left hand was a silver-mounted riding-whip, and in his right, a smart, three-cocked hat, ready to be placed on his bepowdered head as soon as the pyramid of guineas on the table should have been handed over to him.

Whether these delineations deserved commendation or not, I must give my opinion again that the saints had no business whatever in the widow-woman's "lone room." And I will say that the moral inculcated by the parable was little heeded by its frequenters. Night after night the saints looked on perforce at conduct the reverse of saintlike. While the warning conveyed in the Scripture lesson was altogether thrown away on "the gay, honest, hearty fellows" who met there.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A "NIGHT OF IT."

WHEN the Half-pay entered the "lone room," as the widow-woman's muller and fingers had intimated, four of its frequenters had already arrived.

Ned Culkin the gauger was there. Ned was always the first to come and the last to leave. By his own account, he was "none of your pippin-squeezing fellows" that would flinch from their glass. No, he was not the lad to bring down on his head the malediction—by whom propounded, I cannot say,—“Cursed be he who leaves his liquor behind him.” And Ned Culkin's early-day leaden eyes were sparkling; the round face that in the

morning had been pale and flabby, was rubicund and plump; the lips that had been shrivelled parchment were smooth and ruddy; his "shivering of cold" was past for the time; in fact, Ned was "himself again," "brisk as a bee, light as a fairy!"

Nick Mahaffy was there, the pompous little draper and silk-mercier, who always stooped when entering the chapel, to avoid knocking his head against the door-post, many feet above it.

Toby Purcell, the landlord of the "McMahon Arms," was there. Toby Purcell often stole away from his own more pretentious establishment to indulge in the unobserved jovialities of the "lone room."

Paddy Dreelan, grocer and spirit-dealer, was there. Wherever Mr. Nick Mahaffy went, Paddy Dreelan was ambitious to be his satellite.

But neither Nick Mahaffy, nor Toby Purcell, nor yet the modest Paddy Dreelan, were deep-goers. Whenever they stole into the "lone room" they entered it at a pretty early hour, and retired betimes.

Ned Culkin stood up and held his glass high ; the others followed his example, and the Colonel's health was toasted energetically. The complimented man saluted the shoulders of Nick Mahaffy and Toby Purcell with a hearty bang in passing ; shook hands across the table with Paddy Dreeling and Ned Culkin, and took his usual place near the head of the table. Even before he was seated the widow-woman's waitress, a pleasant-looking girl, had placed a steaming tumbler where she knew her most cherished guest always took his seat.

"Health !" burst forth the Half-pay, and he waved his glass round, then took a deep draught, and looked at his compeers with great intensity.

Shortly after the Half-pay had left the widow-woman's shop on his way to the "lone room," in crept the poor "duck," rubbing his hands and cringing.

"I hope I see you quite well, Mrs. Morrissy ?" he said, curving his features to their most abject smile.

"Cry success to the Curnel, my poor fellow ;"

and the widow-woman twirled her muller in the direction of the side-door.

“May the Curnel’s pocket never be—”

“Without a cross to keep the man with the horny toes out of it! Eh, Tom?” The muller again pointed out “the way he should go,” and Tom O’Loughlin passed on to his night’s revel.

One by one others made their appearance. No more than one at a time ever entered the house of “Entertainment.” Had its frequenters come in a flock, or even in pairs, it would have been noticed. A sudden dart into the shop when no eye was observing; no pause therein—quick, quick, out of view behind the screen, and in through the winding passage. This was the general mode of entrance to the privacy of the “lone room.”—A first-rate speculation on the part of the widow-woman was this “lone room.” Good reason had she to congratulate herself on her perception of the phase of human frailty that makes people set a value on hidden pleasures, and think lightly of secret peccadillos. Half an hour after the arrival of the Half-pay, there were not less

than a dozen resolute boozers seated within view of the saints of the "lone room," and setting at nought the lesson of the Prodigal Son.

The Dutch-built black-bottles had scarcely reposed for an instant at a time in their cells behind the shop-counter. They had shouted "*dhuich ! dhuich !*" in their several tones, almost without cessation. The widow-woman's muller had been diving to the bottoms of tumblers with an alertness and good-will that proved it to be a muller thoroughly up to its business, and delighting in the discharge of its duty. The well-looking waitress had been coming and going between the "lone room" and the muller "at full trot." Night had been for an hour or more acting as the widow-woman's fast friend, by folding in her thickest mantle such visitors as would not have it known that they were hurrying, under favour of the concealment, to mix in the covert indulgence afforded by the widow-woman's "Entertainment."

At this period a late comer made his appearance. He entered the shop with a contracted brow and an ill-tempered compression of the lips. The widow-

woman saluted him with a flourish of her muller, or sceptre, above her cap, and her most insinuating smile bade him welcome as she addressed him.

“Merry be your heart, Masther Dick O’Meara !”

Richard O’Meara took little notice of her blandishments. He hastened through the side-door, along the passage, and into the “lone room.”

Close at Richard O’Meara’s heels was his noble dog, Teague. On ordinary, daylight excursions, Teague would precede his master, with chest erect, and elevated snout, and smiling face. Now, with drooping tail, and hanging head, and downcast eyes, he followed in the rear.

Did Teague then, disapprove of this night’s visit to the house of “Entertainment?” Was his companionship in discharge of a stern, unpleasant duty, rather than an accompaniment from choice? Was it a proof of the devotion that will conquer repugnance sooner than abandon the object of affection? It was even so.

Honest Teague had been in the “lone room” before, and his high nature had revolted at the part he had

been compelled to take in the prevailing intemperance around him. He remembered with disgust what had passed; he would not again have accompanied his master, did he not consider his services might be needed. It was Teague's conviction that his guardianship was requisite.

Richard O'Meara, as I have said, entered the widow-woman's shop with a contracted brow and a surly compression of the lips.

He had left home to escape his causes for self-accusation. There, his wife's pale face, struggling to disguise its terror under a sickly feint of smiling eagerness, had been a reproach to him. Michael Hanrahan's cheerless looks of disapproval had been a reproach to him. His eldest boy's apprehensive avoidance had been a reproach to him. The shrinking of his younger child from his loud voice, and his roughness, had been a reproach to him. Mary's thin artifice to avoid intrusting the baby but lately born to his arms, had been a reproach to him.

A dogged, morose resentment towards the home accusers took possession of him. And in this mood,

his eye scowling, and his chest heaving with pent-up anger, he had sprung from his seat, and had left the place of accusation to seek forgetfulness in the noisy and senseless fellowship of the "lone room."

"Go with him, and take care of him, good dog," said Michael Hanrahan, stooping to Teague's ear and whispering therein.

Teague looked into his adviser's sorrowful eyes, and understood him.

So it was that Richard O'Meara and his dog Teague, the one in surly humour, the other in discharge of an unpleasant duty, entered the widow-woman's shop.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PLEASANT, HEARTY FELLOWSHIP.

HERE was a hubbub of voices filling the apartment as Richard O'Meara raised the latch of the "lone room."

The pompous Nick Mahaffy was "insisting" on something most dictatorially, and at the highest pitch of his voice. Toby Purcell, in a mellow bass, with a waggish smile playing round his mouth, was steadily eliciting Nick Mahaffy's dictatorship. Paddy Dreelan was boisterous on Nick Mahaffy's side of the question. (By-the-way, Paddy Dreelan had been, as Toby Purcell insinuated, busy looking at somebody's tumbler going to his, Paddy's mouth.) Ned Culkin the gauger, in a brazen, harsh voice,

was pert and snappish with every one. Tom O'Loughlin was loud in his approval of everything that everybody said. Others, in twos and threes, were eagerly discussing isolated topics, all talking loud, as needs must, if they wished their nearest neighbours to comprehend the gist of their discourse. On one point there was unanimity; all were devotedly imbibing the widow-woman's "liqueur de contradiction," as I have heard whisky-punch not unaptly designated.*

The only person in the "lone room" not vociferating was our friend the Half-pay, or Colonel. He still sat where he had first fixed himself, to all appearance unchanged and unchangeable. His stern look was

* The term "liqueur de contradiction" was applied, I have been told, by some astonished Frenchman to Ireland's national beverage, on first beholding the admixture of ingredients, and further when he witnessed its effect on those who drank it. "There was," he said, "whisky to make it strong, and water to make it weak: there was sugar to make it sweet, and lemon to make it sour." So far it was certainly a "liqueur de contradiction." And as to its effects on the drinkers it was also a "liqueur de contradiction," inasmuch as no two persons were found to be of one mind after indulgence in it.

riveted, now on one, now on another ; occasionally a single " Hah ! " escaped him,—quite sufficient, the brief monosyllabic laugh, to testify that the din was gratifying to him.

All at once the Half-pay sprang up to his full height. His glass was elevated above his head ; his jaws were snapped asunder, and he vociferated the single word " Welcome ! " with such stentorian force of lungs that it was heard above the uproar. Every look was instantly directed to the point indicated by the exclaimant's cudgel, and every " gay honest fellow " was on his feet promptly.

" Health ! " the Half-pay bellowed, and he flourished his glass with one hand, and his cudgel with the other.

" Mr. Richard O'Meara's health and hearty welcome ! " sang out Tom O'Loughlin. And " Mr. O'Meara's health and welcome," went from mouth to mouth.

Tom O'Loughlin threw himself backward on his seat, thereby protruding his chest so as to give a purchase, as it were, to his lungs, and his " Hip,

hip, hurra !” rang through the room as shrilly as if it were a trumpet-note sounded in the din of battle.

Tom O’Loughlin was celebrated far and near for his effective leadership whenever “Hip, hip, hurra !” was to be sung out. It was a small ambition, but it was an ambition with Tom O’Loughlin to be so distinguished. Every one to his vocation !

So Tom O’Loughlin took upon himself on the present occasion (no one better fitted) to act as fogleman of the “lone room.” He waved his glass backward and forward before his face, swaying his person with the motion as he sang out, with a brazen distinctness :—

“For he’s a right good fellow !
For he’s a right good fellow !
For he’s a right good fel-l-o—w !
Which nobody can deny :
Which nobody can deny,
Which nobody can deny—
For he’s a right good fellow !
Which nobody can deny.
Hip ! hip !—hurra !—hurra !—hurra !”

This standard ditty, certainly not distinguished

for its lyric excellence, was joined in by the entire assemblage of the "lone room," the Half-pay excepted, who contented himself with bellowing out the final syllable of each line. Tom O'Loughlin was the leader of the strain throughout. Could the saints on the wall have escaped from their frames, off out of hearing they would have raced, to a dead certainty, so stunning was the discord.

Yet when the finishing "Hip, hip, hurra!" had been shouted, and that every "right good fellow" had thrown back his head, gazed at the ceiling, and emptied his glass, neighbour smiled blandly upon neighbour, each congratulating the other on the musical feat they had accomplished.

Tom O'Loughlin, the fogleman, banged his empty glass down upon the table as he resumed his seat. Every "right good fellow" banged down his at the same moment, and Ned Culkin, protruding his lips, emitted a peculiar, quivering scream that rang shrill and piercing, not only through the "lone room," but also up the passage and into the shop. Almost instantly the Hebe of the establishment appeared.

She pounced on the drained measures with marvelous celerity, they were all on her tray in the twinkling of an eye, and away she went. Many seconds did not elapse until they were ranged single file in front of the widow-woman. In went sugar and water with magical despatch ;—pop, pop! in dived the muller. “*Dhuich, dhuich, dhuich!*” screamed and shouted the black bottles. Widow-woman, Hebe, muller, and black bottles were all so active and willing in their several vocations, that before the slightest note of impatience could escape the “right good fellows,” a replenished, steaming jorum was at every man’s right hand.

Richard O’Meara’s knotted brow uncoiled ; his eyes flashed with excitement, and an expression of reckless abandonment replaced the surly expression of his lips.

He put on a frolicsome, devil-may-care air. (No less objectionable term would be so descriptive of his manner.) He threw himself into an exaggerated rhetorical attitude ; with sonorous voice and theatrical action he addressed his expectant audience.

“ ‘Friends, countrymen, and lovers—

“ ‘Most potent, grave, and reverend seniors,’ which description of the immortal poet, it must be admitted, suits you to a T—rhyme and reason together, you see. I am curved double, as you may perceive ; I cannot stand erect before you, so oppressed and weighed down am I by the magnitude of the obligation you have imposed upon me. So overcome am I by the enthusiastic, the vociferous, the obstreperous cordiality of your welcome that——”

“Hear, hear, hear!” fugged Tom O’Loughlin, shrill as a whistle.

“Hear, hear!” Toby Purcell added, in his pleasant, mellow bass. Toby’s “hear!” was an utterance of enjoyment, Tom O’Loughlin’s of adulation.

“Hear!” bellowed the Half-pay. And the cry was taken up and shouted bravely.

“Grand!” suggested Nick Mahaffy to Paddy Dreelan, across the table.

“Grand—grand entirely,” assented Paddy, obsequiously.

“Silence, silence, and be damned to the whole of ye!” barked forth Ned Culkin. “You’re stopping the speech. Go on, my worthy, go on!”

“In vain have I paused,” resumed the mocking orator, “for words—whereby—to—express—the—the—agonizing poignancy—of—my—feelings—at—this—moment——”

What change was it that came over Richard O’Meara? Was the sinking of the voice to a plaintive quavering, affected or real? Was the choking spasm in the throat assumed only? Was that sudden pause, as if the words would not come upwards, no more than acting? Was that harassing expression of face counterfeited? Was the watery film in the eye brought there artificially? Was that resounding blow upon the chest inflicted for effect alone?

No—no. I have it from Toby Purcell, the only person present perhaps who perceived the change, that he looked with surprise at Richard O’Meara’s altered countenance. And he understood on the instant that the words of the sentence, begun in

mockery, had brought suddenly to the speaker's mind the recollection of all he had forfeited, and the degradation to which he had descended ; that the subsidence of the voice, the struggle for utterance, the tears ready to overflow the eyes, and the smiting of the chest were reality, not acting.

With a violent start, as if rushing from the presence of an accuser, Richard O'Meara passed his hand hurriedly across his forehead and eyes. And then his mask of bravadoing jocularly was again put on.

"Come, my jolly companions, every one," he cried out ; "our honest, hearty Colonel did not exhaust the vocabulary when prefacing my health. One word as if shot out of a musket was sufficient for his purpose, and I will detain you no longer from the lethean draught that changes the leaden eye of grief to sparkling diamonds. If this glass—" and he held it forth at arm's length—"were a well, sixty feet to the bottom, and filled with hot and strong whisky-punch, I'd drink it every drop to the good health of every pleasant fellow I see around

me. Good health, merry and jolly days and nights to all of us. We'll drive dull care away, boys; we'll tickle the ribs of mirth until he laughs lustily, and we'll chorus him as he laughs,—upon my soul we will, boys!"

And Richard O'Meara drained his draught of lethe amid the clamorous approval of the "lone room," Ned Culkin's peculiar scream piercing through the din.

"Gentlemen all," said Tom O'Loughlin, passing his hands through each other smoothly, speaking softly and insinuatingly, and grinning to the corners of his eyes—"I'm going to say what I know you'd like, and it is this: I propose that Richard O'Meara, Esquire, of Cascade Cottage, be our chairman of the night."

"Hear!" exploded the Half-pay; and there was a general noisy assent.

"So be it, my merry men all, so be it. I accept at once the hilarious duties of your chairman. *Nolo episcopari* is out of place here. And so to it we go."

With a rakish swagger of manner he seated himself at the head of the table.

"Hallo! the vice-chair is vacant, I see. Tom O'Loughlin, my hearty thorough-goer, I appoint you as my viceroy. A veteran devotee you are, Tom O'Loughlin, to our Irish Bacchus—a heartier fellow, by long odds, our Hibernian Bacchus, than he of the ancients. As his veteran, devotee, friend, Tom, I place you in the vice-regal chair."

Tom O'Loughlin assumed his station with right good will.

"And now, my jovial lads, you have made me king of the Gregory, as we used to say at school. And I don't intend to be your king Log, let me tell you. I will begin my rule by issuing a decree. In the first place, we'll make a night of it."

"Hear!" burst from the Half-pay.

"Hear, hear!" screamed the Vice-chair.

Ned Culkin gave his curious scream, and there was a boisterous assent so far.

"Every jolly fellow here present must drink fair. No heel-taps or sky-lights allowed. When your

king of the Gregory presents the bottom of his tumbler to the zenith, all must follow suit, and when a fresh round appears, they must be brimmers, every glass. No one must quit the room to-night in an erect position—on the leaf of the hat is the only mode of exit permissible. Such is my decree; let no man disobey me at his peril.”

“What’s the punishment against rebels, Mr. Chair?” asked Toby Purcell.

“The slinker from the ordinance must drink an extra tumbler—or the Vice-chair or Ned Culkin must drink it for him.”

“Hear, hear!” assented Tom O’Loughlin.

“Ned Culkin is able and willing,” agreed the gauger.

“We’ll begin the business of the night on fair terms,” said the Chairman. “Every tumbler up. Vice-chair, attend to your duty.”

“All primed and loaded” reported the Vice-chair.

“Then, ready,—present,—fire!”

The commander put his glass to his lips, and emptied it to the bottom.

“Ground arms!”

Following the example of the chairman, each tumbler was banged against the table, mouth downwards.

“Come, Hebe!” and the king of the Gregory addressed the watchful waitress. “Another round, hot, strong, and sweet.”

The empty vessels were away and back again in a twinkling.

“Now, boys, we start on equal terms. And this, our ammunition, must not lose strength by lying over. I’ll give a toast. I’ll propose the health—

—Of as honest a soul,
As ever drank liquor or fathomed a bowl.

A wrong version of the old song I’m giving you, but ’twill do. You must take a deep draught to the health of one who is like an old-times drama—or like Byron’s Cain—‘a Mystery.’ Not one can tell who he is or whence he came.”

“Hear!” interrupted the Half-pay, explosively.

“But this we know, every one of us, that after

a way of his own 'he is a right good fellow,' and that you could not prevail on him to throw a stone at a bottle of whisky——"

"Hear!" broke in the Half-pay, as suddenly and as loudly as before.

"Come, boys, our Colonel's health. On your legs—nine times nine——"

All stood up instantly. Glasses were waved, and the "hip—hurra" was deafening. And the standard ditty "He is a right good fellow," was chanted.

There was no personation of bashfulness by the Half-pay. He stamped his cudgel, he stamped his leg against the floor, and his "hip—hurra!" was even more distinct than that of the vice-chairman. He remained standing when all the others had resumed their seats. He raised his cudgel aloft, and banged it down on the chairman's shoulder with such force as to make the recipient of the blow wince.

"Health!" he announced, and the same scene was repeated as before.

"And now, my hearties," flourished the "Chair,"

as for brevity and good-fellowship he was called, "let the toast and the glass keep going merrily. 'Scrape me, and I'll scrape you,' shall be the order of the night. Let one propose the health of some-one, and that some-one return the compliment, and so keep the ball a-going. Toby Purcell, send it aloft."

"Never say no, Mr. Chair," assented Toby; and in his own rotund, plausible way, he brought the pretensions of the "Vice-chair" before the meeting.

In town or country there wasn't a more loyal disciple of the Irish Bacchus—the god of punch—Toby made bold to call him. Tom had made an offering to the tipsy divinity of a nice little property; and at one time or another during his life, every bone in his body had been broken (except his neck-bone) in the service of the same god. As a further claim on the affections of those assembled, Toby Purcell related how Tom O'Loughlin's nose had been bent nearly in contact with his left cheek, by a blow from a fellow-worshipper. And how, after

having been worn thus awry for beyond a year, it had been put back into its original position, through the favour of the divinity so ardently followed, by another blow from another fellow-votary. Toby Purcell, in conclusion, appealed to Tom O'Loughlin himself as to the truth of his averments, and Tom pledged his word of honour as to the perfect accuracy of the statements. Toby Purcell therefore put it to the meeting—"Wasn't the poor fellow that suffered so much in so good a cause deserving to have his health drunk?"

The claim was fully admitted, and Tom's health was toasted with all the honours.

On the "scrape me and I'll scrape you" principle decreed by the Chair, Tom O'Loughlin proposed Toby Purcell's health. Tom's body was bent; his hands, as usual, revolved smoothly round each other; his voice was soft and insinuating, and his wrinkles curved into their most obsequious smile.

"Toby Purcell," he said, "was the best-natured, the most open-hearted, the most generous, the most hospitable gentleman, within the circle of the sea.

Toby was never without his pleasant joke, and his pleasant face. And his good tumbler of punch—ay, his tumbler after tumbler, was always given with a free hand—”

“To do you justice, Tom, you never refused one,” interrupted the eulogized individual.

And Toby Purcell’s health was received in the usual style.

With the Chairman’s sanction Toby Purcell brought forward Ned Culkin’s merits.

In his preface, Toby told the story of “the man up in the hills” who when dying, proclaimed triumphantly that he had killed a gauger, taking credit for this praiseworthy act, as sufficient atonement for all the sins of his life.

“But ’twould be the pity to take Ned Culkin’s life. Ned could neither see nor smell a private still; and as for his dipping-rule, ’twas never known to find one half-glass in a puncheon of whisky more than the honest dealer said was there.”

To prove, however, that if Ned Culkin did not increase the revenue in one way, he certainly did

in another. Toby stated—that during his lifetime Ned Culkin had consumed three hundred puncheons of whisky to his own share. The money value of which was, not to mind shillings and pence, nine thousand pounds, and that the contents of the three hundred puncheons would fill a lake sufficient to float a ship of eight hundred tons burthen!

Lest there might be a question as to the accuracy of these computations, Toby Purcell called on Paul Carey the land-surveyor, who was present, to witness in his favour. Paul Carey had assisted Toby in his calculations, and now, consulting his field-book, he confirmed the accuracy of the statement.

So Ned Culkin's health was given from the Chair, the honoured man screaming ecstatically at the recognition of his well-founded claims to distinction.

The proceedings went on briskly. Paddy Dree-lan, usually modest and unobtrusive, sprang up in high excitement to propose the health of—

“The head man of the town, by Cork!—Mr. Nicholas Mahaffy.”

Before the toast was offered for acceptance, Toby Purcell related what he had heard as fact, that Nick Mahaffy's yard measure was only thirty inches long. This calumny Nick Mahaffy repelled indignantly. Paddy Dreelan swore "by every cottoner in Cork" that the fellow who thus spoke of Mr. Mahaffy's yard measure was a backbiter and a lying thief. Whereupon a warm disputation went forward, all present taking sides on the question, some seriously, some jocularly. On the Chairman's suggestion, Toby Purcell admitted that he did not himself credit the report. And the health of "the head man of the town, by Cork!" was received in high glee, and with due celebration.

Nick Mahaffy brought forward the name of Paddy Dreelan—"a harmless, inoffensive creature, that came of a good owld stock of people—"

Here again Toby Purcell interfered. He remembered Paddy Dreelan "when he was a blind beggarman on Taghmon Bridge, in the County Wexford."

The joke was too manifest on this occasion to be taken in dudgeon, and—

“The health of the blind beggarman from Taghmon Bridge” was given from the Chair, and received with laughter and great “hip, hip, hurraing.”

And so, one after another, they were all “right good fellows,” every one of them.

Meantime the widow-woman’s muller had had no rest. The black bottles were hoarse shouting “*dhuich!*” The waitress was obliged frequently to wipe her brow with her apron, so rapid had been her goings and comings.

It was evident the “Chair” had resolved that the departures from the “lone room” should be “on the leaf of the hat” in real earnest. The Chairman would dash on to insanity, and he would force all to accompany him. So the drinking was furious.

“There is one present,” he shouted forth, “whose health has not yet been drunk. Come here, Teague, my boy—paws up here.” He tapped the table, and—not a bound as usual—Teague

reluctantly obeyed. He put up one paw only ;— in obedience to more peremptory orders he put up the other. He looked reproachingly and affectionately into his master's eyes. It was with a scowl of dislike that he surveyed the rest of the company.

Mr. Chair eulogized his dog, and promised on his part that in a short time he too would become as good a fellow as any other fellow. Teague's health was received uproariously, and Teague's master compelled his dog to swallow a full glass of punch, pledging the health of the company. The poor dog, thus excited, proceeded to take his share in the vagaries going forward.

It was the remembrance of a like excess to which he had been on a former occasion forced to submit, that had saddened Teague to-night when he accompanied Richard O'Meara to the house of the widow-woman.

CHAPTER XXV.

FURTHER JOVIAL EFFECTS OF THE "CRUISKEEN
LAWN."

THE inebriated Teague insisted on getting a seat at the table; he placed his paws thereon, looked round him giddily, and, whenever laughter or high talk went on, he barked, not in a surly way, but with a loud, tipsy bark.

Following the pledging of healths, and under orders from the Chair, came "a round of says and sentiments." For the information of those to whom this obsolete usage of good fellowship is unknown, I may explain, that these "says and sentiments" were scarcely ever original. They were "says and

sentiments" in vogue on such occasions, and were used as provocatives to further drinking.

"The land we live in," was one; "May the best of our days be to come," was another; "Erin go bragh!" another; "The Liberator!"—"Our absent friends!"—"May the old drunkards bury the young doctors!"—"May we never want a friend, or a bottle to give him!" and so on, winding up with, "Our noble selves!" coming with great *éclat* from the Chair.

"Hallo! Vice-chair!" shouted Dick O'Meara, "we'll have no flagging in our fun. Clear your whistle, and sing us a song. Let us have 'Ha, ha, ha!' Vice-chair."

"I'm all obedience, Mr. Chair," bowed and smiled Tom O'Loughlin.

"Hear!—Ha—ha—ha!" vociferated the Half-pay; and "Ha—ha—ha!" rang round the "lone room."

The song called for was Tom O'Loughlin's masterpiece. The "Ha, ha, ha!" was a laugh with which each verse terminated, and when choroused at an advanced stage of inebriety, it was

like demon-laughter. I give one verse as a specimen :—

“ When my wife Chevaun goes to ride,
Two *suggaun* stirrups I’ll provide ;
And she’ll trot on in pomp and pride,
And I will run by the *garraun’s* side.
Sing—Tee-i-iddle-dee,
Tee-i-ee ;
Ha !—ha !—ha !
Fo-de-too-rol-lea.”

“ A very good song, very well sung ;
Jolly companions every one !”

—chaunted forth the Chairman, when Tom had given his final “ Ha, ha, ha !” He was chorused in his chaunt, and then—

“ The Vice-chair’s health and song !” was toasted. This chaunt, with “ the health and song” of the singer, was the Chairman’s province at the finish of each strain, as the songs went round.

“ I have a claim, Mr. Chair ?” asked Tom O’Loughlin, insinuatingly.

“ An undoubted claim you have, my hearty.”

“ Ha ! Then I call on Mr. Toby Purcell for a song.”

"A right good call, Vice-chair. Take a drink and lilt away, Toby."

"I wouldn't stop the night's enjoyment for the world," answered Toby. "I suppose, Mr. Chair, every one must contribute his share?"

"Every one, Toby,—or drink a glass of salt and water."

"Well, no salt and water for me, and so, here goes."

Toby's song was of very humble pretensions as a lyric, but to each verse there was a chorus of three lines, that, for the humour it contained, went far to redeem the jejune merit of the rest. The air was sad and slow, the chorus given by the singer in melancholy cadence, and chorused by the company in like mockery of seriousness. One verse will tell for all the others:—

"The poor trees would be leafless, no flowers would blow,
No grass in the meadows, no potatoes would grow;
And ourselves we would wither, and droop, and decay,
Unless showers were sent for to moisten the clay."

Chorus—"Sure we'll all be laid in the grave below,
So we'll drink to our memories *before we go*."

The morality inculcated in the chorus greatly impressed the "jolly companions."

Toby Purcell, as soon as his "health and song" had been "tossed off," as Ned Culkin called it, named Ned as the next vocalist.

Ned Culkin declared he could not sing with a heeltap of punch before him. He called on the Chair, out of regard to his intended "contribution of mirth," to order that all glasses should be emptied. This was a reasonable request, and it was ordered accordingly. Then fresh brimmers appeared. And then Ned Culkin began, in a mincing, cracked treble :—

"Listen !—listen !—listen !"

He paused, and turned his head from shoulder to shoulder, after the manner of a cock-sparrow.

"Sups apiece all round, boys, before we go farther ;" and he took "a sup" himself, and all "the boys" took "sup's apiece" after him.

"Listen !—listen !—listen !"

Ned Culkin again sang. He paused as before, and turned his head as before.

"Sups apiece once more, boys," he repeated. And the "sups apiece" went round a second time.

And so Ned Culkin went on, with alternate "Listen!—listen!—listen!" and his "Sups apiece all round, boys," until it was accorded that he had sung—

"A very good song, very well sung,"

and that he was "a jolly companion" too.

There was one half humour, and one half pert mischief actuating Ned Culkin when he named the Half-pay as the singer to follow himself. Every one knew that such a continuous unloosing of his jaws by the Half-pay, as the emission of a song would necessitate, was with him a sheer impossibility. And neighbour nudged neighbour glee-ishly, anticipating "the Curnel's" perplexity.

The Half-pay disappointed them all. He sprang up, he held forth his glass in his left hand, while pointing with his cudgel directly at that feature of Tom O'Loughlin's face, which had, according to Toby Purcell's statement, undergone such unheard-of vicissitudes,—

“Ha!—ha!—ha!”—he snapped forth.

“Fol-de-too-rall-loo,” chimed in the Vice-chair.

And the Half-pay resumed his seat as suddenly as he had risen. He looked from face to face, as if he would transfix his companions by his glance, and, undetected by any one present, the silent laughter circulated along his teeth, inside his re-clasped lips.

“Song!” and the Half-pay touched the shoulders of the Chairman.

“A song ye must have, my jolly companions,” assented the Chair.

Richard O’Meara’s voice was round, mellow, and musical, and, assuming a thorough Bacchanalian air, he sang the fine old drinking-song of the “*Cruiskeen Lawn*,” with its Irish chorus:—

“Gra ma chree, ma cruiskeen,
Slauntha gal ma vourneen,
Gra ma chree ma cruiskeen lawn:
Gra ma chree ma cruiskeen,
Slauntha gal majvourneen,
Gra ma chree ma cruiskeen,
Lawn, lawn, lawn—
Gra ma chree ma cruiskeen lawn!”

—setting the jolly companions half crazy, as their voices mingled together.

“May that pipe of yours, Mr. Chair, never be without a drop to oil it,” said Tom O’Loughlin.
 “Mr. Chair, if ’twouldn’t be too much to ask, who knows but you’d give us your own song of the ‘Cruiskeen Lawn.’

“To be sure I will, Tom, with a heart and a half”

• *Dick O’Meara’s own Song of the “Cruiskeen Lawn.”*

“Who’s he that says ‘Alas!’

Whilst the pleasures of the glass

Upon his brooding sorrows dawn?

Oh, no! he is not worth

The best gift of his birth—

Thy smile, my little Cruiskeen lawn, lawn, lawn,

Thy smile, my little Cruiskeen lawn!

Chorus—Gra ma chree, etc.

“The t’other day, ’tis said,

As Phœbus rose from bed,

And stooped his thirst to satisfy at dawn;

Instead of honey’d dew,

His hurry led him to

A jorum of our Cruiskeen lawn, lawn, lawn,

A jorum of our Cruiskeen lawn!

Chorus—Gra ma chree, etc.

“He thought it was the vase
From which, in ancient days,
Their godships all their nectar had drawn ;
And since, as I’m alive,
He swears he cannot thrive,
Without our Irish Cruiskeen lawn, lawn, lawn,
Without our Irish Cruiskeen lawn !

Chorus—Gra ma chree, etc.

“Huzza ! for Irish whisky,
And all its joys so frisky !
Huzza ! for all its frolic, roar, and fun !
Och hone ! Och hone ! I can’t
Say half the things I meant
In praise of thee, my Cruiskeen lawn, lawn, lawn,
In praise of thee, my Cruiskeen lawn !

Chorus—Gra ma chree,” etc.

As described to me by Toby Purcell, Mr. Chair’s own song produced the most enthusiastic demonstrations of affection for “the Irish Cruiskeen lawn.” During the progress of each verse the “jolly companions” smiled delightedly into each other’s faces, swaying their bodies, and waving their glasses. And when the burthen of the

“Cruiskeen lawn, lawn, lawn,”

came on, each, as if by common consent, laid his

tumbler lovingly to his breast, and pressed it to his heart fondly, and took a hearty pull preparatory to the commencement of the second verse. And Mr. Chairman, carried away by the half-insane enjoyment over which he presided, was the most enthusiastic of all. He had in fact succeeded in banishing all remembrance of the home-reproach which had sent him forth with a darkened countenance, to the intemperance of the "lone room."

As the toasts and "says and sentiments" had, to use the language of the room, "gone the rounds," the song went "the rounds" also. Not one was treated to the glass of salt and water as a penalty for being unmusical.

Nick Mahaffy would stand up for it against any one who should gainsay him, that he could sing songs for "a week of Sundays," but that just now he couldn't call them to his mind. One only he could recollect, and *that* he used to sing when he was in his "Reading-made-easy," long ago.

"The best you could sing, Nick, my jovial fellow. Out with it!" ordered the Chair.

Nick Mahaffy's Song of Juvenility.

"There were two birds upon a stone,
Sing diddle-diddle-dee-dum!
One of those birds he flew away,
Sing diddle-diddle-dee-doo!
If the t'other isn't gone,
You may catch it to-day,
Sing diddle-diddle-dee-d-u-um!"

"Very good song, very well sung,
Jolly companions every one!"

"Health and song, Mr. Nick Mahaffy——!"

"I call on you, neighbour Paddy Dreelan," announced Mr. Nick Mahaffy. Paddy, obeying his patron's summons, sang a downright boozing ditty, scarcely to be expected from a person of his day-time cringing quietude of deportment. But Paddy had, as Toby Purcell had stated, seen somebody carrying his tumbler to his mouth.

The Refrain of Paddy Dreelan's Boozing Ditty.

"No crying, no sighing—
A woful face don't let me see;
I'll shut my shop,
And go take my drop,
And so live easy, gay, and free!"

Paul Carey, the land surveyor, who with Toby Purcell had calculated the quantity and cost of Ned Culkin's whisky consumptions, sang a well-known laudation of punch.

Refrain of Paul Carey's Song.

"Punch cures the gout, the colic, and the phthisic,
Punch cures the gout, the colic, and the phthisic,
Then be it known to all men,—
Be it known to all men,—
Be it known to all men,
'Tis the very best of physic!
Hurra! hurra! hurra!"

"Begone dull Care" was given by an unmarried tippler, who shouted forth:—

"My wife shall dance,
And I will sing,
So merrily pass the day—"

all unheedful of his state.

And "The Land of Potatoes O," was chanted.
—The land—

"Where there's hospitality,
All reality,
No formality
There you'll ever see;

But, free and aisy,
We will so amaze ye,
You'll think us crazy !
Dull we'll never be !
Foll-de-roll-loll !
Foll-too-ra-loll-lee !" etc., etc.

The Chairman volunteered a favourite lyric, generally sung on such occasions as the present. He made free with the text, however. Whenever the milder beverage, wine, was eulogized in the original he substituted the more pungent incentive of the "lone room." Thus :—

"That time flees fast, the poet sings,
Oh ! let me then advise—
In potteen punch to wet his wings,
And seize him as he flies," etc., etc.

A waggish fellow, when his "lilt" came round, changed the character of the night's melodies, for he crooned—

"There was a man, and he had a wife,
And when she died he killed her ;
And after that it came to pass
That they had three fine childer.

These childer all they went to slide
Upon a summer's day ;—
The ice it broke, and they all fell in,—
And the rest they ran away !”

The singer of this classical romance (answering somewhat to the French “ *Il y avait une femme, qui s'appelait Thérèse ; Elle avait huit enfants, qui est la moitié de seize,*” etc.) was proclaimed to be a “jolly companion” too.

As the night wore on, each fresh brewing of the “*liqueur de contradiction*” hurried the drinkers to the climax of excitement. It was no longer necessary that a draught of salt and water should be held up *in terrorem*. “Contributions of mirth,” as the songs were named, were proffered, not only without solicitation, but they were forced on the company.—“*Croonauns*,” “*Planxties*,” and love-songs were given in the Irish language, to impart a twang of the soil. And Tom O’Loughlin volunteered a stave in low-Dutch, as he stated it to be, the unintelligible gibberish of which set the “jolly companions” screaming and shouting with ecstasy. Ultimately

there was a Babel of singing, and talking, and jesting, and laughter. The "*liqueur de contradiction*" had set all the inmates of the "lone room" crazy.

And poor tipsy Teague was as crazy as the rest. He would allow no one to remove him from his seat, and with his paws resting on the table he looked wildly from one insane face to the other, and yelped and barked stentoriously. The Chairman proclaimed himself as Pluto presiding over a revelry in Pandemonium ; that Teague was Cerberus, and that he could see a cluster of heads sprouting from the brute's shoulders, and barking in chorus.

Approaching to the third hour past midnight, the noise of the "lone room" had abated to a comparative lull. Of the twelve who had "set to" at the commencement of the debauch, only five remained, the others had escaped, one by one, as occasion offered. The five incorrigible toppers were, Richard O'Meara, the Half-pay, Ned Culkin, Tom O'Loughlin, and one other less noted person.

"Hallo ! I say ! the festive board is half empty !"

cried the Chair, looking around in blinking surprise. "Paltry cowards they are, and accursed may they be. May Gallaher's malediction lie upon them for leaving their liquor behind them. Up close to me here, my loyal few. Leal subjects ye are, who have remained faithful to your "king of the Gregory." My valiant comrades, notwithstanding the base desertion, our light shall not be—extinguished. No. 'Music hath charms to soothe the savage ear,' and we will be musical. I proclaim—that we—strike up—a concert. Ha, ha, ha!—a concert, by the life of man!—that Beethoven, or Mozart, or— or Mendelssohn,—or any other master—would be astonished at—to speak moderately! Yes, yes, upon my soul,—yes—astonished at—ha, ha! hallo! hullo! Colonel, my worthy, a bassoon you are to be—a—ha, ha!—a prime instrument you will prove yourself. The devil a shriller, more squeaking clarionet was ever blown, than *you* will be, Ned Culkin! Viceroy Tom, I name you my trombone. I see another leal subject down there; you're a stout-built, full-bodied fellow, ha, ha! and your hide

is well-strained to keep you within it. My big drum *you* are to be. The leader of the orchestra so appoints his band. His musical majesty himself will be a fiddle—ha, ha, ha!—hurra!”

It was evident that the “concert” decreed by the Chair was no novel introduction to the “lone room.” The Half-pay stood erect at the first summons. He inserted the ferule of his cudgel between his lips, and fingered it so as to prove his readiness to take part in the coming performance. Ned Culkin bounced up at once, steadied himself, fixed his hands as though he held a clarionet between them, and protruded his lips to receive the suppositious mouthpiece. Tom O’Loughlin pushed his left fist before him at arm’s length, and held his right fist close to his right shoulder. The big drummer, he within the tightened hide, shut both his fists hard, and held them ready to pummel his own sides. And Mr. Chair snatched up the snuff-dish, placed it beneath his chin, and laid the snuffers across it as his fiddle-bow.

“Ready?” asked the Violin.

“Ready !—ready !—ready !—ready !” answered the Bassoon, the Clarionet, the Trombone, and the Big-drum.

“Then the Fiddle opens the concert. Here goes.”

The *maître d'orchestre*, with exaggerated contortions and grimaces, rattled the snuffers across the snuff-dish, imitating with his voice, in the most ludicrous fashion, the instrument he represented. The Half-pay, with knitted brows and apparent intensity, worked at imaginary orifices in his cudgel, while a hoarse sound, somewhat near “*bhrum—bhrum—bhrum !*” was barked forth as bassoon. Ned Culkin swayed his body violently upwards and downwards as he fingered his imaginary clarionet, and his quavering scream was piercing as he so jerked his person. Tom O’Loughlin worked his ideal trombone to and fro with might and main, accompanying his motions with most discordant sounds: and the Big-drum battered his own fat sides most furiously, forcing out with every blow such hollow noise as a well-beaten big-drum should emit.

Fast and furious the ludicrous "concert" proceeded. The snuffers and snuff-dish rattled and scraped energetically, while the human Violin squeaked a galloping jig; the jaws of the Clarionet were distended, and the Clarionet's body bent and rose, and the Clarionet's fingers fingered the air, and the Clarionet screamed shrilly; and the Bassoon barked "bhrum!—bhrum!—bhrum! continuously; and the two arms of the Trombone worked backward and forward as if the Trombone were possessed, continuous groaning sounds coming from the Trombone's mouth: and the hide-bound Big-drum battered away fiercely, with a hoarse "bow-wow! bow-wow!" imitative of a big drum, following the blows.

Now and again the instruments paused to take breath, and the instruments laughed, loud wild laughter; and the instruments wiped their teeming foreheads between whiles; and the instruments drank deep draughts of liquor, and then went on again with renovated vigour.

Had these five last tipplers of the "lone room" become raging mad? Yes, veritable maniacs were

they. Mad children you would report them to be, so earnest and energetic in their tantrums, and yet so ludicrous their antics.

And on, on went the concert, varied by drinking and meaningless laughter. At length, the Big-drum fell heavily to the floor ; Fiddle, Clarionet, and Trombone shouted lustily ; and the " bhrum !—bhrum !" of the Bassoon was barked out riotously. After a time, the Clarionet sank down, exhausted and disabled ; next, the Trombone staggered and fell. Now Fiddle and Bassoon alone stood erect. Between the two a fierce rivalry went on for a while, and then the Bassoon tumbled helplessly. Of all the five instruments the Fiddle alone remained upright. So the Fiddle shouted "Huzza ! huzza ! huzza ! The king of the Gregory was the conqueror !"

As the instruments fell successively, the dog Teague, who had also been an excited participator in the concert, barking all the while, worried each with apparent relish for the pastime. When all four had sunk down, he went from one to the other

rolling them over and shaking them, as if sharing in his master's victory, and intent on despoiling the slain.

Then Richard O'Meara sat down, breathing laboriously, and shouting and laughing. He seized a glass in his right hand and another in his left.

"Your health, O'Meara, my boy!" he said, in a congratulatory tone, and he drank from his right-hand glass.

"Thank you, Dick, my staunch old fellow!" and he drank from his left-hand glass.

"Your health again, O'Meara," and he drank again from his right-hand glass.

"Thank you, Dick, my hearty!" and he drank again from his left-hand glass.

And so he went on, right against left, left against right, to satisfy himself as to his superiority as a drinker, and in laudation of himself as hero of the night.

Notwithstanding a strong repugnance towards my subject, I have described in detail this night of

nights in the "lone room," that the reader of this, my narrative, may be able to draw a comparison between the home of Richard O'Meara, and the misnamed "indulgence" for which he had abandoned it.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

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THE TOWN OF THE CASCADES.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DAY-DAWN.

NONE of the birds occupying the various habitats in the neighbourhood of the cascades had spent the night in the widow-woman's "lone room." Some of those birds had slept through the hours of darkness in the leafy grove; some in the close hedgerows; some in ivy-shaded clefts; some close-nestled in the moss beneath the gorse bushes; some in the dry grass, canopied by the fern. Not one of them had been in the "lone room," there to outrage the saints looking from the walls, or to scandalize the spruce Prodigal Son, or his most respectable father in bag-wig and flowered dressing-gown.

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At the first upward glance of the ascending sun, when the very earliest tinge of dawn painted the eastern sky, every one of these birds, having imbibed no whisky-punch during the night, was up and stirring, while, as if in adoration, they poured forth their notes of welcome to the uprising source of light. On the topmost bough of the highest tree, as one conscious that the superiority of his music entitled him to the loftiest position, the speckled thrush sang his gladness-song, pausing between whiles, to bring to mind some excelling modulation he had been dreaming of. Less aspiringly perched, the blackbird sounded his flute-like, mellow pipe. From the bushes came the linnet's sweet warble, the goldfinch's merry carol, the impetuous notes of the chaffinch, the mellifluous warble of the robin, the piercing fife music of the wren. The black-cap in the reeds by the water-side prolonged his night-long ditty to aid the other feathered songsters of the morning. The swallow warbled as it took its primal air-bath. Even the single note of the swift, as it darted hither and thither, was modulated to music.

Not one bird dwelling in the neighbourhood of the cascades that did not rejoice at the return of day, and assist at early matins.

If there be any of my friends who have not heard the first morning hymn of the birds, I would advise him not to let another spring, or summer, or autumn dawn pass by, without going forth to listen to it. He will find that even unbidden, his heart will soar with the cheery song of the birds towards the throne on high whence gladness comes to the innocent, and to which the gushing melody he hears on every side ascends.

But—let him not go forth, as did Richard O'Meara, the conquering "king of the Gregory." Let him not go forth, as did Richard O'Meara, with unsteady gait, with rolling eyes, with hot, inflated breathing. Let him not dare, as Richard O'Meara dared, to scare the innocent and joyous birds from their adoration, by the discordant vociferation that bespoke not the heart's cheerfulness, but which was the canticle of insane, bravadoing recklessness.

As the birds in the neighbourhood of the cascades

hymned their matins to salute the approaching dawn, Richard O'Meara was wending towards his cottage shouting his canticle of recklessness.

His dog Teague, nearly recovered from the excitement produced by the liquor he had been compelled to swallow, preceded him. You would say that in the dog's knitted brows and troubled eyes, there was self-reproach and sadness. And as his master reeled behind him he paused constantly to look towards him—apprehensive for his safety.

The sun as yet had only limned with vermilion the light clouds hovering above his couch ; elsewhere obscurity still prevailed.

Within a few yards of the Cottage of the Cascades, where some large trees stretched their branches across the road, there was yet the gloom of night. Here Teague scowled into the darkness, and growled threateningly. As if in answer to his challenge, a female figure, enveloped from head to foot in a dark-coloured mantle, emerged from the shade, and stood in the centre of the way along which Richard O'Meara came.

Teague recognized the intruder: he had modulated his growl from a notice of attack to a murmur of disapprobation, and took his place close by the muffled figure, muttering his dissatisfaction.

Richard O'Meara reeled along, unconscious of any obstruction to his progress, until he came in contact with the person standing silently to confront him.

"Hullabulloo!—hullabulloo!" he exclaimed as he recoiled; "who is it—that stands—here—to—im—pede—the royal—progress—of—the all-conquering king of the Gregory?—Eh?—who is it?—Answer, or I will—send you to the bastinado—and from the bastinado to the bowstring. Know—that I am no longer—a fiddle—I am "the king of the Gregory"—before whose prowess—all opponents—were forced to bite—the dust."

He changed his manner suddenly when a confused idea struck him that it was a female who stood so erect before him. He shook his head with owlish gravity, becoming in his own esteem exceedingly wise.

"Ellen, Ellen,"—he expostulated, "you are foolish, very foolish. Ri—di—cu—lous it is of you, Ellen, to be out in the—night—air—star-gazing. I know—you love me, Ellen,—and by my royal word, I love you in return. But—I will not—permit this. Ellen, my beloved wife that—you are,—I will use a fond husband's authority to prevent it. You have been drooping and sickly of late,—and unreasonable hours—spent out in the cold of the night—I must—interdict. I must and I will, Ellen, my dear wife,—I must and I will—interdict it——"

"May my heavy hatred, and my bitter curse, follow your Ellen every turn she takes from her rising to her lying down!" broke in the person Richard O'Meara addressed as his wife. And as she spoke, she cast the hood of her mantle back upon her shoulders.

"Ha, ha, ha!—This is Nora Spruhan I am lecturing, and not my wife Ellen,—ha, ha, ha!" It was the mockery of a laugh that Richard O'Meara laughed.

"Ay, Nora Spruhan I am, not your wife

Ellen. Nora Spruhan I am, and I am come, in the darkness,—in the darkness to be followed by no day-dawn for me,—to let loose the scalding of my heart, so long burning inside of it.”

“Ha, ha, ha!—Nora, my girl,—’tis a myth, that scalding of the heart. Ha, ha, ha! no such ailment in reality.”

And he sang out lustily, flourishing his hand above his head, while he sang :

“ This world, they say, is a world of woe,
The same I do deny ;
Can sorrow from the goblet flow ?
Or pain from beauty’s eye ?”

“No—not at all—not at all—ha, ha, ha! had you been with us, to-night, Nora—upon my life and soul, you’d say—that sorrow—was—ha, ha, ha! —a goblin,—a phantasmagoria—without substance, —the semblance—the semblance only, of a monster, —who must flee as the devil flees from holy-water, the instant you dash a tumbler of hot, stout whisky-punch into his eyes, — ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! — ha, ha, ha, ha !”

And,—listen to me, Nora—. I'll tell you what—happens then—ha, ha, ha!—Im-me-diate-ly that you have well scalded the leaden eyes of sorrow—with the hot whisky-punch, mind it must be hot—hot—whisky-punch, don't forget that; the hot whisky-punch is far beyond wine for the exorcism. The moment, that you have well-scalded sorrow's leaden eyes, and that he makes his exit—howling—ha, ha, ha!—in comes a merry imp, all fun and frolic. Let me see;—upon my faith, I believe 'tis the same sprite makes his entry anew,—the gloomy black pall that had covered him flung away. He is now a—a Jack-pudding of a fellow,—I see him before my eyes at this moment, ha, ha, ha! A motley jacket and hose he has on,—flesh-coloured pantaloons, and great rosettes in his pumps, a tall, steeple-shaped hat on his nob, and a row of bells jingling about his jowl. Ha, ha, ha! And he dances, and capers, and sings;—he is a frisky, fantastic rascal, that he is. And he flourishes his bladder on the end of his pole,—and he bangs—right and left as he curvets about. And every one

he bangs shouts as loud as he can shout,—and there is glorious merriment. Hurra, hurra ! ha, ha, ha !—

“ He that goes to bed, and goes to bed sober,
Falls as the leaves do,
Falls as the leaves do,
Falls as the leaves do, —
And dies in October.

“ But he that goes to bed, and goes to bed mellow,
Lives as he ought to do,
Lives as he ought to do,
Lives as he ought to do,
And dies a good fellow.

Hurra !—hurra !—hurra !”

“ ’Tis the pity I could have for you, Dick O’Meara,” interrupted Nora, vehemently and scoffingly. “ ’Tis the pity I could have for you, Dick O’Meara, if it wasn’t that in the heart you have hardened, as hard as iron, there isn’t any pity for any one.”

“ Blood, blood, Nora, girl,—don’t be wicked. I’ll—I’ll—let me see—. Ay,—I’ll solder up my ears, if you rattle your tongue at me. ’Pon my life and soul I will, ha, ha, ha !—solder up my ears to

a certainty. I won't listen,—not I—not I—no, not I—”

“As sure as the sky is above our heads—you must and you will listen to me, Dick O'Meara. I could reckon years since I spoke out my mind in words. Often and often, while the years passed, did my teeth draw the blood from my tongue to keep the burning words unsaid. Listen to me now,—you must.”

“‘I think,’ quoth Thomas, ‘women’s tongues of—ay of aspen leaves are made,’—ha, ha, ha! They rustle when—there isn’t wind to bear up a midge;—upon my life, yes. Oh Lord!—oh Lord!—how they do whirl in the breeze, ha ha, ha!—Bring a steam-engine to a halt with your left hand—you might;—stop a woman’s tongue with both hands, you couldn’t. I defy you—ha, ha, ha!—But Nora,—mind me now,—don’t knock the pins from under the merry-Andrew I told you of. Mind that, ha, ha, ha!—”

“It was this day eight years I met you first, Dick O'Meara.”

“Agreed, nem. con., the premises granted.”

“In my cousin Pat Malone’s tent it was, where you came in and sat down beside of me.”

“No wonder I should sit beside you; your black eyes were magnets. Your eyes were—

‘As black as Kilkenny’s own coals,
And through my poor bosom they burnt two big holes—’
ha, ha, ha! They did so—ha, ha!—”

“At the races of the sand hills, near to the say it was.”

“Agreed again. By the life, I was flush in money that day. I won on O’Brien’s ‘Morgan Rattler.’ ”

“I was a very young crature then, an’ I didn’t think there was deception in the world. From that time out, I met you every day. You said you were filled with the burning love for me, and I gave credit to your words. But they were lies, black lies you spoke to me, Dick O’Meara!”

“My soul, but you are becoming furious, Nora. Down, Teague, down, dog! Take care,—he does not like your temper, Nora.”

Teague's growl had become an ominous bark.

"Ay, hulloo him at me if you want to stop my words; but I tell you that if his teeth were fastened in my throat I would say what I came here to say. Neither you nor your dog can close my lips. The door of my father's house was shut against me, the neighbours jeered me, and turned their backs on me, and on my shame. I had no roof to cover my head—"

The levity of inebriety passed away from Richard O'Meara, and was replaced by a stupid sullenness. He was awed, too, by the girl's impetuous accusations.

"Nora,—Nora—" he expostulated angrily.

"Ay, ay!—I have the undherstanding of what you would say to me. You gave me shelter in your house, you would say;—and so you did. I came, and was your kitchen servant. Well content was I to be your servant. But—, Dick O'Meara!— without a warning given to me, you brought one home to be the mistress while I was the worker in the kitchen;—the worker for you and her!—"

“Nora!—” A second attempt at angry exposition.

“Whisht, man,—whisht again!—I know what your words would tell. You said to me, you would give me a home in another place,—in another land where none would know me. And I made answer to you,—‘No—No!’—And that *No* was the same as if my book-oath was given. I didn’t tell *why* I said that No to you. I’ll tell you now. I came here to tell it.”

Nora brushed her brow and cheek with the lower extremity of her mantle, while she paused for an instant to take a lengthened respiration.

“You brought a wife across your threshold. I skulked in the hall to fasten my eyes on her. If I saw one coming in to be the mistress unsightly to look at;—if I saw that you were her husband for lucre sake;—what great matter would it be? But no,—no,—no!—To my grief I saw a young creature, comely and fresh, and blooming as an early morning in May. I knew, at the very first look, that the love promised to Nora Spruhan was taken

from Nora and given to this stranger. From the moment my eyes lighted on her, the heart withinside of my body was changed from flesh and blood to hard iron. It couldn't have the love in it longer for any one;—and the rank hatred of the iron heart was upon you and your fresh, comely wife.

“But I wouldn't go. No. I said to myself that I wouldn't stir from the same house ye lived in;—that I'd stop in it to have my revenge on both in some way or in some how. The iron heart of the cast-off Nora said to her, ‘Fasten your fingers in her white neck, and tighten them round it, and then let her fall a breathless corpse.’ The iron heart said this to the cast-off Nora. And she would have obeyed it if she could!—Ay—and she'd face the judge upon the bench without fear or shame, if the one that took the love from Nora lay dead at her feet.”

“Nora,” said Richard O'Meara, “you are, by God——”

“Whisht, man!—Call no names; you have no

right to call me out of my name. What I am, *you* made me.

“But the fresh young wife was well guarded from me. You guarded her; Michael Hanrahan guarded her; others guarded her; and I did her no harm. No thanks to me for that.

“Dick O’Meara, open your ears to my words!—Whisperings and colloquings I heard, and the hearing of my own ears, and the sight of my own eyes gave me to know,—that the curse coming from the iron heart of Nora Spruhan was falling;—on you that changed that heart to iron, and on the one that took the love from Nora, to make prize of it herself. Day and night, Dick O’Meara, my watch was upon you. ‘No need for you, Nora Spruhan,’ I said down in my kitchen, ‘to tighten your hands round the white throat of the one that came here, so fresh and blooming, and happy. No need for you to run the venture, and to do the sin. Dick O’Meara his own self will give food to the craving of your hatred.’

“Dick O’Meara, you are this night levelled with

Thomas Monahan that lies helpless drunk in the streets of the town, for the passers-by to toss from their road. And the young, blooming, comely wife, will soon be in her early grave. And she will be driven there by you, not by the iron-hearted Nora!

"I came out to meet you face to face, and to tell you this. That the wrong done to Nora Spruhan will be avenged by the one that wronged her."

Nora turned suddenly, and disappeared among the trees. Richard O'Meara wavered for a while where he stood. The dawn, looking down on his face, saw an expression of stupid horror there. He reeled, and fell heavily on the road.

Michael Hanrahan had been a witness of the scene just described. He came from his concealment, and with his aid and the aid of Teague, who seized the overpowered drunkard by the collar, and held him in a sitting posture, until Michael, with great exertion, raised him to his feet,—Richard O'Meara gained his cottage.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“OUR ANGEL’S” SORROWS.

IT is not necessary for my purpose to signify the length of time that had gone by between the closing of the last Chapter and the commencement of this. I have before notified my intention of recording the most prominent occurrences only, that marked the progress of Richard O’Meara into the mire wherein irreclaimable drunkards sink ;—whence they scarcely ever emerge.

It was a genial day in April. Shadow playfully veiling sunshine, and sportive sunshine emerging laughingly to chase away the shadow, the “sun-showers” of April falling, as the shadow flitted from the sun-burst. Gently the drops came down,—barely sufficient to moisten the wings of the breeze that

gambolled along the water above the bridge of the cascades, soared over the waterfalls, skimmed under the arches, and fluttered through the tender foliage rising above the river where it flowed placidly onward.

On this particular day, no matter after what lapse of time, Michael Hanrahan rested both his elbows on the parapet of the bridge, frequently referred to, and gazed meditatively into the water beneath. Shoals of ephemera, born of the sunbeam of spring, sailed along the rippling surface of the river before it plunged downwards, and the trout, all on the alert, ascended incessantly to snatch the manna provided so abundantly for them. But although, through the transparent medium, the brisk and graceful motions of the speckled denizens therein could be well noted, Michael Hanrahan evinced no interest. I doubt that his eye took cognizance of them at all. His gaze was intent and earnest, no doubt, but his brain was so engaged with inward cogitations that outward speculation scarcely painted a picture thereon.

He was roused from his reverie by a startling

bang against the flag-stone immediately at his right elbow. The sound was produced by the blackthorn cudgel of the Half-pay, and the thwack was purposely given to attract Michael's attention.

"Ho!—Curnel. Good morrow and good luck."

"Maw!—Maw!" saluted the Half-pay. "Well—all?" he inquired; and he pushed his arm straight from him, and pointed the blackthorn in the direction of Richard O'Meara's cottage.

"Ullaloo!—well, indeed!—anything at all you like *but* well, Curnel. The meeaw and the misery is on us,—the heavens be our help this day!—The grief and the sorrow is under our roof;—the grief and the sorrow is in the one home with us,—and won't quit us, I'm afeard."

"How?—Why?—"

"As to the how and the why, Curnel,—there is no witchcraft wanting to find that out."

"How?—Why?—" the Half-pay repeated;—and he punched down his cudgel and his composite leg simultaneously, thereby denoting eagerness and excitement.

“What brought Sorrow to come and put up his quarters with us, Curnel, was this ;—”

And Michael doubled the fingers of his right hand against his palm, placed the resemblance of a tumbler so formed, in contact with his lips, threw back his head, and looked towards the sky.

“That is what brought it all on us, Curnel, my deary !”

Michael's appellation of “my deary” to the Half-pay had no kindness in it. The tone of voice changes the meaning of words materially, and the Half-pay understood that he was not Michael Hanrahan's “deary” at all, although so called by him. My schoolmaster, when I was a lad, used to call the boy he intended to flog his “deary.”

“How?”

The Half-pay made a tumbler of his hand as Michael Hanrahan had done, placed his fist to his mouth, threw back his head as Michael had done, and looked to the sky as Michael had done. The language of signals

suitied him best, and Michael was not ignorant of this.

“How?” the Half-pay again asked, quaffing a second time from his figurative goblet, and looking very resolutely at Michael, when he had finished his aërial draught.

“I’ll tell you that same, Curnel. Our poor Masther Dick is as grand a looking boy as you’d find footing the sod anywhere at all; and he has a warm and a loving heart inside of him as you’d find at the end of a year’s journey, thravel as fast as you could. But *go vic och a dhiea urth*, he’s a soft ownshuch of a crature that’s easily led, and he followed the bad example that was set before him. He took on to the liquor, my heavy hatred be upon it for liquor! And the dhrink brought wickedness, and ill-temper, and sourness. And with the sourness and ill-temper, sorrow walked over our threshold. Now you have it. May the Lord forgive them that brought our grief upon us by their sinful example.”

“Who?” the Half-pay vociferated, with apparent ferocity.

"I won't take long to tell you who they were, Curnel. One of them is that shivering, shaking Ned Culkin the gauger; another of them is creeping, skulkin Tom O'Loughlin;—and another of them is your own sweet self, Curnel, my deary."

As Michael again addressed the Half-pay as his "deary," with a modulation of voice little befitting the term of endearment, he turned full round, rested his back against the parapet of the bridge, and looked directly into the face of the person he spoke to. There was deep sadness in his big, grey eyes, and his fleshy lips drooped as if he were about to weep.

The Half-pay's brows were drawn tightly together until they met above his nose. From the point of contact, three deep furrows radiated, very seldom seen there;—and while his breathing came in laboured puffs, he looked as if he would perforate Michael's brain through his eyes. Michael's sad look did not quail before "the Curnel's" scowl.

"I came here, Curnel," he said, speaking slowly and affectingly, "on the chance of meeting with

you on the owld spot, and I knew the hour to come. And I came to tell you our forlorn state, and to ask of you for the Lord's sake to give us your helping hand to push the sorrow back again over our threshold."

The Half-pay was visibly affected by Michael's speech and manner. Instead of delivering himself verbally, however, of his emotion, he flourished his cudgel over his head, meaning thereby that he was deeply interested. He stumped a few paces towards the descent of the bridge, and back,—the interpretation of which Michael rightly took to be, "Go on!"

Accordingly, with the Half-pay again frowning intently into his very eyes, Michael continued :

"If ever there was an angel sent—to fix itself in a cottage, that angel was sent to live under the same roof with us. And a blessing came with our angel when she walked up the garden-walk, and under the porch, and into the hall. And the sunshine was round us and about us ;—inside of the cottage, and outside of the cottage, the winter's day

as well as the summer's day. The sunshine came with our angel, and it shined on us everywhere !”

During the whole of this poetical eulogium, the Half-pay's beaver was raised as high as his arm could elevate it, and his head bent.

“ Our angel had a comrade she might be proud of ; sightly to the eye, loving, and tender, and careful of her ;—one that was able and willing to keep the thorns or briers or rough stones from her path, and to make it smooth like the soft grassy sod undher her feet. And the sunshine that the angel brought fell straight on him ;—oh !—there wasn't one happier, gayer fellow living on Ireland's ground !—”

The Half-pay twirled his cudgel above his head, expressive of enthusiastic assent to Michael's fluent oration.

“ We were prosperous, as well as happy, so we were. But the enemy of God and man had envy of us, like the envy he had of the poor couple in Paradise. And he came in among us, and he tempted the comrade of our angel with the liquor.

And he, the poor fool of a man, drank the liquor at the devil's prompting. At the first going-off he didn't take a heavy share, but by day and by night the enemy tempted him, and more, and more, and more he dhrank,—more and more every day. And then he'd wrangle with us, and he'd tell foolish lies that his own bungling tongue would prove to be lies, when he spoke them. And he'd say to our faces that we belied him;—that he didn't dhrink at all. We were asthray for a while to know where he got the liquor, but I found it out."

Michael paused to take breath. There was no twirl of the black stick this time, there was a consciousness in the Half-pay's unusually unsteady eye, that told he placed some of Michael's expositions to his own account.

"Curnel,—the enemy of God and man spewed a spawn of his on our flure, and that spawn he formed into the shape of a woman. By all accounts 'tis an owld thrick of his to turn God's best handy-work into tools for his thrade. A good young woman like our Mary is beyond the beyonds;—a bad

young woman is the —— I'll say no more about what she is ; 'tis the safest way !

“ Well, Curnel, this spawn in the shape of a young woman gives help to her masther, the enemy of God and man. And when our poor misbeguiled fool hides himself and takes the liquor, without any-one to see him, 'tis the spawn of a young woman brings it to him. I'm not without knowing why it is that she helps the enemy to destroy us ;—I heard that from her own words. Often and often I did my best to banish her, but she won't depart from us. May the Lord forgive her—she is wicked !

“ Curnel, Curnel, the dark, heavy clouds are over us and about us. Curnel, our sunshine is gone, and we are in darkness. Och!—Och !—Och ! my grief it is that I have to say so !”

I have before had occasion to remark that Michael Hanrahan was not a stern, manly fellow in his deportment. At this portion of his narrative, his voice became tremulous, he entwined his fingers together, held both hands, so interlaced, before his chest, and rocked himself to and fro, as a woman in

grief would do. The Half-pay drew in his breath with a cringe, and his troubled look winced before that of Michael.

“I have more to tell you,” Michael continued, “and the worst of my story is to come yet. Our poor victim of a man dhrank, and dhrank, and dhrank of the liquor the tempter gave him. And by the means of it, often, and often, and often, it came about that he wasn’t the light-hearted, laughing, loving, poor fellow that the Lord had made him to be. And the enemy put wickedness and sin into him with the liquor, and he was hard-hearted and cruel even to our angel—to the angel that he loved his own self beyond the life in his body. And he was a bugaboo to his childre. And he was all as one as a raging madman with his angel. And she shivered and shook before him. And she came to be like the flower the hail-storm falls on: she drooped her head, and she withered,—drooped and withered like the poor broken flower!”

Here Michael unlaced his fingers, and struck his hands together. The Half-pay banged his cudgel

against the parapet of the bridge with the whole force of his arm. He shook his head impatiently, and dashed his hand across his eyes; but he did not succeed altogether in brushing away the tears that still moistened them as he resumed his gaze on Michael.

“The bitterest of all, I have now to say, Curnel.”

Michael had passed his finger through a loop of the Half-pay’s braided frock. He drew his listener towards him by this link. It was a very significant action; the Half-pay understood it to mean:—

“Let not one word of what I am now saying be lost on you.”

“I am going to tell you what happened the very last night of all, Curnel. The little child that God sent us of late, is pining and decaying, the same way that our angel, its mother, is pining and decaying. Our angel had the wheeny, sickly, little child lying across her lap—and she was crying, and sobbing, and lamenting over it. Indeed, indeed, ’tis a hard heart that wouldn’t grieve to hear her,

and to see her. The poor Mary was sitting close by our angel, and she was shedding down tear for tear with the mother on the pale, gasping little child. Our poor deluded victim came in, and he reeled here, and he reeled there. At his bidding Mary left the room. I was outside, and she came close to me, and the door was banged against us. I could hear Mary's heart beating, and I am positive she could hear mine,—the both of us were in such fear. We heard an argument inside. The dhrunken man cried out for liquor, I could undherstand that. The poor angel had no liquor to give him, and then he called her names, and made a charge on her that she wanted to stint him in his own house, and that she must not attempt it. For the first time,—for the very first time since our angel stepped over our threshold, she spoke out to her husband from her bleeding heart—no wonder—no wonder, Curnel! But, Curnel!—I heard a blow given—och!—a heavy blow ;—and I heard a long, loud cry, that went through me as if a sharp sword was sent into my breast—”

The Half-pay bounced, as if the same sharp sword had suddenly entered his body.

"I say it to you, that I heard the heavy blow, and the long, loud cry. I pushed the door wide open. Before I could take two steps another blow was given, and the third blow was given—given. Ay, the heavy hand of the sthrong man sthruke our angel the three blows. She fell down on the floor, and the puny, sickly little child, that she and Mary had been crying over, rolled away from her and lay helpless, wheening, and whimpering—'twas a sad sight to look on, Curnel——"

Michael burst into tears, and large, answering drops fell from the Half-pay's eyes, and ran along his cheeks—probably the first he had shed since childhood.

There was a pause. The Half-pay thrust the balls of his thumbs into the sockets of his eyes, and rubbed hard with them. He clenched his hand, and thrust it with the full force of his arm directly towards Michael Hanrahan's face.

"Struck her?"—he abruptly asked.

"Sthruck our angel!"

And Michael pushed his fist within an inch of the querist's mouth—thus replying by word and action.

The questioner hastened at his briskest pace down the descent of the bridge. He wheeled round, hurried back again, confronted the narrator of the outrage committed on the "angel," repeated the thrust forward of his fist, and barked out a second time—

"Struck her?"

"Sthruck our angel!" Michael Hanrahan again replied, again suiting the action to the word.

The Half-pay started off again, returned again, repeated his query in the same manner as before, receiving the same verbal and pugilistic reply.

The Half-pay fixed himself firmly, confronting Michael.

"Damn him!—damn him!—damn him!"

Three several times did he snap his jaws asunder

to utter his thrice repeated malediction. An unprecedented occurrence, be it known.

“This way I fastened in him—”

Michael seized both the arms of the Half-pay, and held his gripe as tightly as he could clench his fingers.

“Och hone, och hone! little chance had I to hold him.”

And Michael's relaxing grasp allowed his hands to fall helplessly.

“He flung me down to his feet the same as if I wasn't bigger or sthronger than a chicken, and he kicked me with all his force. I'm wounded here, and here, and here,” Michael touched his head in three places. “But I put my two arms round his legs, and I fastened my hands together. Little I cared about myself, but the dread was on me for our angel. If ever there was a raging madman, he was one. Never will I forget the staring and rolling of his eyes; never will I forget the foaming from his mouth as I looked up at him. Never to my dying

day will his wicked oaths and threatenings lave my mind. Never—”

“Our—angel?” questioned the Half-pay, raising his beaver.

“While I was leaning over the bridge waiting for you, Curnel, I made up my mind on it, that ’twas the Lord, and the Lord only that put it into our angel’s mind to act the way she did.”

“How?”

“She recovered herself from the floor where she was lying, you’d think, dying,—like as if ’twas a miracle was worked on her. She snapped away the little, puny child from the arms of the shivering Mary; Mary, the crature, had picked it up. She made a run over; she raised up both the arms of its father; she put the wheeny child lying on them, and she pressed it against his breast. The poor thing whined a little whine; the madman looked down at it, and he wasn’t a madman any longer. Ah! ’twas God himself that inspired our angel to bring the sickly little child, and lay it against his breast.”

That the occurrence did take place, as described

by my friend Michael, is certain. That an almost instantaneous quietude—a supernatural calm, as it appeared to him—replaced the fell rage that had possessed Richard O'Meara is equally certain.

I should say that the wife understood, without any process of consecutive reasoning, that her maniac husband was to be subdued through his affections,—if subdued at all. And that her prompt and energetic proceeding was one of those impulses of woman's instinct which reach the mark, while man's more obtuse nature pauses. I should also say that she understood, still without reasoning (or if reasoning, only by a process like that of the despatch along the electric wire), that the helpless, pining baby placed, as Michael said, “against his breast,” would appeal to Richard O'Meara's true nature, temporarily lost in the whirl of drunkenness.

And this explanation by no means interferes with Michael Hanrahan's doctrine of divine and special inspiration.

“Take your hands away, Michael,” Richard

O'Meara said, bending down, and speaking in a whisper.

"Take your hands away, Michael ; I will harm no one."

Michael believed the words whispered to him. He relaxed his grasp, and stood up. He was unsteady on his limbs, from the effects of the bruises he had received.

"Our angel," as in his new nomenclature Michael had dubbed his young mistress, was now kneeling, her hands joined, her terrified look riveted on her husband.

For a moment or two Richard O'Meara drooped his head over his passive, whining burthen. The scene so pathetically described by Michael had taken place in a bedroom. Richard O'Meara walked unsteadily to the bed. He laid the little child gently and cautiously on the coverlid ; he looked apprehensively round for an instant, and then he went softly out of the apartment.

Ellen O'Meara rose from her knees. She tottered towards the bed where her infant lay, her shattered

and overstrained nerves suddenly relaxed, and she fainted.

* * * *

Richard O'Meara, bareheaded as he was, passed out of his cottage, and into his garden. It was a very bright night, for the moon was at full. The "night-walker" did not take his way along the gravelled paths of his garden. Forward he went, trampling on the flowers, his progress figurative of his mental state, one would say. The zigzag print of his feet in the well-tended flower beds marked the directness of his course. He broke through the boundary hedge at the end of his garden; he scaled the boundary wall into the road. And over hedge and wall at the opposite side he made his way.

"Masther Dick, Masther Dick!"

Although his name was called in a whisper, the whisper fell as distinctly on his ear as if it had been a loud shout. He paused and turned round.

In the road he had just crossed, Nora Spruhan was standing, her face and figure fully recognizable in the white moonlight.

"I give you a caution," Richard O'Meara said, in a deep ominous tone of voice—"I give you a caution, to keep wide from the reach of my arm this night. If you follow one step farther, I will seize on you ; I will take you, and fling you into the river. I'm in the humour for it, and I'll do it."

Nora Spruhan did not follow, and Richard O'Meara continued his way. He went direct for the cataracts so often spoken of ; he walked into the water until it reached above his knees ; and he stood there under the heaviest column of the falling water.

"You can see from this the very spot where he stood," said Michael, taking the Half-pay by the arm, and pointing downwards. "He stood on the shelf in the middle where the fall is strongest. I stole out after him when he was going out ; Lord be good to us, I took it into my head that he was for taking his life by throwing himself into a watery grave. I was afraid to go too near him ; and if he did dash himself in what could I do ? But I saw poor Teague, the dog, at his heels, and I knew that

poor Teague wouldn't let him sink, and that between Teague and myself we'd save him. But he didn't do what I dreaded; and indeed, and indeed Curnel, if you were to see our poor honest dog keeping close to him as he waded into the river, and if you were to see the poor brute trying to look up at his master while the water was tumbling down direct into his eyes, you'd love our poor dog, and you couldn't help it."

After a while Richard O'Meara retraced his steps to his cottage. He made his way into an empty bedroom; drenched as he was he flung himself suddenly on the floor, and slept the heavy, uneasy sleep that renovates the drunkard for a fresh debauch.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"FOLLOW THE LEADER."—THE COLONEL'S HAND AND
WORD.

"I'LL bet a halfpenny you often played at 'follow the leader,' Curnel?" Michael Hanrahan asked ;
"that is, at the time when you were a small chap, and when your two natural legs only wanted the wind of the word to be off at full gallop. I'll engage you often played 'follow the leader' then, Curnel?"

"I did."

"Ah ! isn't it the sporting play, Curnel ?
'Hurroo !' says the leader, 'follow the leader, boys ;'
and off he goes at the top of his speed. 'Hurroo !'
and away we are at his heels as fast as the legs can
carry us. Up with him to the top of the cranky

hill, like a crazy goat ; up to the top of the cranky hill with every one of us, all crazy goats like him. Down tumbles the leader, down we all tumble too. Over, and over, and over, the leader rolls down to the bottom, along the slippery grass ; over, and over, and over, we all roll down, taking pattern by him. And we knock against each other, and roll over each other, till we get to the bottom like him. Hurroo ! up he is again, and away he goes ; away we go, hot foot. There's no stepping-stones over the brook though ; we must come to a halt ! Whil-laloo, my dear ! he won't pull up. He shuts his fists, bends his back, and takes a canthering run at it, and over the brook he flies, clearing it from bank to bank. He is a tip-top leader, that he is. Hurroo ! by the piper we'll have wet jackets. No matter, we can't be skulkers, we must 'follow the leader' to the off side. Over we go,—ha !—but four of the leaden-heels are in over head and ears, and sprawling at the bottom. 'Don't laugh, boys,' says the leader, 'tis a shame.' But he laughs his own self, and we all screech while the blinking, drowned

rats are pulling out. Naw bocklisch ! off we are again, as fresh as ever. There's the leader making a big jump over nothing at all ; by coorse, we must jump sky-high over the same. Now he's sitting atop of the style playing the bagpipes on his shin-bone, wagging his elbow to bring the wind into his chanther ; we must squat there too, and play our tunes afther him. Och ! there he is now, going up to the cow in the middle of the field, and making her a very mannerly bow, dragging down his poll by pulling at his forehead-lock ; then he tugs her by the tail and makes off. The cow only waits for three mannerly bows, and three tugs at her tail ; off she scuds, and the ' Paddy Lasts ' can't overtake her. Hurroo, hurroo, hurroo ! over hills, and into hollows with us ; and in the long run we come to a standstill where the leader is sitting on the bench, undher the owld hawthorn at the Cross Roads. We were making a short cut from school all the while, and afther sitting down to dhraw breath a minute, every one takes his own way home. Och, Curnel ! what a sporting play it is !"

While Michael described the "sporting play" of "follow the leader," he became quite excited. Carried away by the vivid recollection of his boyish days, there was a temporary forgetfulness of his special object. The excitement ceased with his subject, and his previous sobriety of manner returned.

"Curnel," he said,—"'follow the leader' is played by big men, when they aren't boys any longer. 'Follow the leader' is played by owld, shaky heads with white hair on them, and the greatest fool in the world can tell that 'tis 'follow the leader' into the churchyard and down into the grave."

The Half-pay, by a punch down of his cudgel, and an abrupt motion of his head, signified his credence in this philosophy. We doubt, however, if he was able to see the drift of its propounder, as it must be admitted that Michael took a rather round-about road to his goal.

"Upon my word, and upon my conscience, Curnel, 'twasn't to be a back-biter or a dethractor

I came here to-day. The Heavens above knows it wasn't to let my tongue loose against our poor victim of a man. No, no,—Curnel!—I made known to you our sad state, and what brought us to our sad state for the reason,—that I want you to be our angel's friend,—to help her in her need. If you don't—mind what I say to you here face to face—in the land of the living she won't be long, and you'll be to blame.”

The Half-pay never gave such an out-and-out flourish of the blackthorn as he did when Michael closed his appeal.

“I'll help!”—he barked forth.

“Well, the long and the short of it comes to this, Curnel. I came here to ask you for the love of God to play ‘follow the leader’ for us to the saving of our angel's life. That poor misguided fool of ours, Heaven help him, wouldn't be the way he is only for that same play. He wouldn't gallop at full speed, if he hadn't others to lead the way for him.”

The Half-pay winced.

"Curnel, I might as well go whistle jigs to a milestone, thinking that it would dance the jig to the music, as to go to Ned Culkin, or to Tom O'Loughlin. Ned Culkin would shiver out of his skin, and his bones would fall asundher with the shaking if he stopped the dhrink. And Tom O'Loughlin would shrivel to a natomy if he didn't get the liquor. Mary and myself laid our heads together, and we said our only hope was in you, Curnel. 'Go to the bridge, between twelve and one o'clock,' says Mary, 'and you'll be sure to meet the Curnel. He'll be afther sleeping off the fumes of the night,' says she, 'and he'll be there to take in some fresh air afther the dhrinking.'"

The Half-pay winced again.

"'Go to the bridge, Michael,' says Mary to me. 'The Curnel dhrinks like a fish,' says Mary—"

The Half-pay shrugged his shoulders.

"'But,' says Mary, 'he's a good owld sowl for all that. Make your prayer to him,' says Mary. 'Petition him for the honour of God, and for the

sake of our suffering angel, to give up the liquor himself—’”

“I’ll drink—no more!”

“‘And,’ says Mary, ‘beg and beseech of him that he’ll turn away our poor crature of a man from the dhrink, as well as himself.’”

“He shall—drink—no more!”

“‘We’ll pray for him night and morning,’ says Mary, ‘and the childre will pray for him,’ says Mary, ‘if by his giving the example and the advice, he turns our crature of a man from the dhrink.’”

“I will.”

“Your hand on it, Curnel.”

“There.”

“Well, Curnel,” said Michael Hanrahan, shaking the hand he held, with a long continuous shake, “you’ll have our prayers and our blessing, I promise you. And you’ll be like the giver of a charity—you’ll be joyful yourself.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE COLONEL SETS ABOUT THE REFORMATION OF HIS
CRONIES.

THE past night had been, as Toby Purcell expressed it, "an out-and-out moist night." "A mighty, mighty, mighty happy, agreeable night," Tom O'Loughlin smilingly declared it to have been. "A night above all the nights," was Ned Culkin's estimate of it, as well as the chattering of his teeth would allow him to be heard. And so, it was later than usual when these two devotees to the "Irish Bacchus" emerged from their sleeping apartments.

When Michael Hanrahan had gone away, full of hope in the prosperity of his diplomacy, the Half-pay at once started off on a rapid promenade from one end of the bridge to the other. From time to

time he came to a stand-still, and communed with himself. At each renewal of his hasty march, his leg and stick were delved down resolutely,—significant of firm determination. All the time that he so continued to hurry on and pause alternately,—his knotted brows had not relaxed, and the three deep furrows still radiated towards his beaver. Beyond yea or nay, the current of silent laughter generally circulating behind his lips did not flow.

Ned Culkin tottered forth from his little shabby-genteel house. Tom O'Loughlin thrust his head and neck through the glassless portion of his centre upper story, and having ascertained that the Half-pay was at the usual trysting-place, he hastened to join his neighbour, and both made their way downwards, Tom giving his assistance occasionally to the rickety little gauger.

The usual salutation having been exchanged between the three cronies,—

“Come, Curnel,” and Ned Culkin sought his wonted matutinal support by leaning on the Half-

pay's arm. "Come, Curnel," he chattered, "off we set at once for Joe Darmody's."

"To have our morning,—our cordial drop of brandy to revive us," grinningly assented Tom O'Loughlin.

"Damn—Joe!—Damn brandy!—damn whiskey!—damn punch!—"

Such a continuous series of explosions had never been heard from the Half-pay's lips since his arrival in "The Town of the Cascades." As he blurted them forth, he snatched his arm from Ned Culkin, and the debilitated little man would have fallen had he not grasped the parapet of the bridge.

Next, the Half-pay started away as if pursued, down the descent of the bridge, and some distance further on.

"Thunder and ages!" shrieked out the astounded Ned Culkin. "What kind of humour is that he's in?—If I didn't let him loose, the arm was out of me!—Is it a joke?—or is he in earnest?—or is he in his senses?"

"Upon my faith, 'twould set me to say yes or no.

You could never tell his temper by looking at him. But I half think there's some tantrum on him. As long as I know him, and as often as I drank with him, I never heard him curse before. Oh, did you hear *how* he cursed? Whist!—here he comes back."

Back again did the Half-pay hasten. He halted suddenly in front of the cronies as they stood together.

"Damn—Joe—Dar—mody!"

And on he went as fast as before, in the opposite direction.

"He's gone crazy!" said Ned Culkin.

"There's something about him I never saw before," assented Tom O'Loughlin. "Whist! he's back again."

The Half-pay halted as before in his impetuous career.

"Damn—brandy!"

And again he hurried forward.

As he had done when Michael Hanrahan told of the blows given to "the angel," backward and

forward the Half-pay hurried, as fast as though two good legs of bone and muscle had still upborne him, instead of one. And each time he came opposite his tippling companions, he had a fresh denunciation to make.

As he hurried to and fro, his wondering observers remarked that he frequently raised his beaver, and remained for a time bareheaded. At length, the inward motive power propelling him ceased apparently to work. He stopped short, fixed himself firmly at anchor, and glared from Ned Culkin to Tom O'Loughlin, and from Tom O'Loughlin to Ned Culkin as if he tendered to both his most resolute defiance.

Ned Culkin had not recovered the shaking his rickety frame had got when the Half-pay had so violently tugged away his arm, and he could do nothing but stare and shiver.

"He-he-he!" Tom O'Loughlin giggled; but there was a nervous misgiving in his manner as he added; "you're mighty humorous and uncommon pleasant in yourself this morning, Colonel."

"I'm—furious!"

"We'll be going, Tom," chattered Ned Culkin, and he secured the support of Tom's arm to help him on the way.

"With the best will in the world, Mr. Culkin. And our Colonel will come, I'm sure."

"No!"

The dissent was a bellow to make one jump.

"Well, well!" Tom O'Loughlin temporized in his blandest manner, "Mr. Culkin and myself will take our morning—"

"No!"

And effectually stopping their progress, the Half-pay stood.

"Drink—no more!" he vociferated, slapping his beaver, and driving it down to his ears, significant that he spoke for himself.

"Drink—no more—you!"

"Drink—no more—you!"—

And he pointed first to Ned Culkin, second to Tom O'Loughlin.

What?—could this be possible? To all appear

ance the Half-pay was in no jesting humour. But —phoo—phoo!—that he of all men was to enforce the doctrine of temperance, appeared to be a sheer impossibility. And yet there he stood, effectually barring the progress of the poor shivering gauger, and of the decayed gentleman, to Joe Darmody's—when, arm-in-arm, the blind leading the blind, they endeavoured to move wide of him, he still confronted them.

“Home—home!”

He commanded authoritatively. The two baffled tipplers were sorely puzzled.

“We'll soon see how it is,” whispered Tom O'Loughlin to his friend. “Mr. O'Meara is coming up.”

“Boozey in the night, and thirsty in the morning,” Richard O'Meara said as he came up. He spoke hoarsely and discordantly; his lips were parched and scaly, his eyes blood-shot and sunken; his face was haggard, and there was ill-temper and discontent in his look and about his mouth. His attire was slovenly and soiled.

At the sound of his voice, the Half-pay bounced round and fixed his eyes sternly on him. The expression of the Half-pay's face being at all times ambiguous, Richard O'Meara observed no change in the inscrutable man. He passed on and joined the two others.

He stretched his arms, and yawned languidly.

"I'd take my oath of it," he said, with a sickly attempt at levity, "that the conscience of the fellow that drinks at night, dwells in his stomach. If the stomach does not preach to him, there is no self-accusation. But 'a hair of the same hound' is a classical proverb, a thousand years old at least,—just as true in the land of potatoes as in ancient Rome. So, to quiet conscience, let us have a hair of the same hound down at Joe Darmody's or anywhere else."

"He, he, he! we were just on the road," giggled Tom O'Loughlin.

"On then, in double quick time. Right about face, and head the march, Colonel."

"I won't!" snarled the Half-pay.

"But I say you must, my honest fellow. Come along, man, come along." And he grasped the Half-pay's arm in a friendly manner. The Half-pay jirked away Richard O'Meara's hand, and pushed him back with all his force—no puny strength.

"Drink—no—more!" he shouted forth, as Richard O'Meara staggered from him.

"What—what's the meaning of this?" Richard O'Meara demanded in astonishment.

"You—scoundrel!" roared the Half-pay, "you—poltroon!—you—struck—your—angel—wife!"

Richard O'Meara started as if he had been suddenly pierced by some sharp instrument.

"Rascal!—scoun-drel!—pol-troon!—Drink—no—more!"

And, as in his own fashion, the Half-pay fulfilled his engagement with Michael Hanrahan of turning the husband of the "angel" from his drinking habits, he flourished his cudgel fiercely, to give due effect to his abrupt and abusive expostulation.

Ned Culkin or Tom O'Loughlin could no

longer mistake the point-blank nature of his sentiments.

“And why have you dared,” Richard O’Meara asked, in a hoarse, inward voice, “to meddle in my private concerns? Why have you dared to play the spy on my family affairs?”

As he spoke he approached the Half-pay, it was evident, with no friendly intent.

“Ras-cal! — scoun-drel! — pol-troon! — You—struck—your—an-gel—wife! — Drink—no—more!”

Much more rapidly than the words were uttered—these came only at intervals—did the reformer’s cudgel descend about the head and shoulders of the man he would reform. He was redeeming his pledge to Michael Hanrahan with a vengeance. If there be indeed “sermons in stones,” the Half-pay was seemingly of opinion that a blackthorn cudgel could preach an effectual sermon on the evils of intemperance.

He was grappled by the throat and by the arm. He was a stalwart man, but he was a pigmy in Richard O’Meara’s gripe.

"I will not return your blows, you mad cripple," said his captor, as he shook him and lifted him from the ground; "but I'll fling you over the bridge to cool you."

It is not at all improbable but that this threat, delivered through the clenched teeth of the threatener, would have been carried into effect. But timely interference was at hand.

People flock together as some birds do. When one alights, another, soaring on speedy wing sees a bird of fellow plumage below him. He curbs his onward progress, and circling downwards folds his wings and stands beside his brother. Another and another whirl down, no doubt surmising that something important or attractive is in hand. And so there is a congregation; and as the numbers augment, the quicker do aerial voyagers descend to join them.

Thus it was on the bridge of the cascades. The personal scuffle between the Half-pay and Richard O'Meara arrested the passengers. And as the crowd increased, and loud voices were heard, people hurried

from the town, and ran fast lest they should be late for the altercation.

At the foot of the bridge nearest the town there was a small house, the lower story of which was occupied by shoemakers. As the racers to the bridge went by, the shoemakers stared out. They questioned each other as to the cause of the scampering by their window, and then they too set off, convinced, like the birds, that something worth attending to was in agitation.

These shoemakers, every man and boy of them, were intimates of the Half-pay. For years he had turned in daily to stare at them, to say "Maw—maw!" and little more. But they were attached to him in consequence of his daily visits.

These friendly shoemakers rescued the Half-pay from the peril brought on by his too ardent missionary spirit. As he stood encircled by them, as his body-guard, Richard O'Meara, Ned Culkin, and Tom O'Loughlin walked away into the town together. They did not proceed to Joe Darmody's;—they turned short into the widow-woman's "Entertain-

ment," and there sought the privacy of the "lone room."

The result of their conference therein will be learned further on.

Alack and well-a-day! for the carefully devised plan of Michael Hanrahan and his counsellor and sweetheart, Mary.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HALF-PAY FURTHER PROVES HIS ZEAL, AND
EXCITES HIS NEIGHBOURS.

WHILE in the widow-woman's "lone room" Ned Culkin was eagerly replenishing his system with a fresh supply of caloric to replace that which had so rapidly radiated into the cool morning air—while the decayed gentleman was elevating himself from his beggarly condition, to a forgetfulness of what he had been, and what he was—and while the degraded Richard O'Meara was restoring his unstrung nerves to the unnatural tension they had of late been forced to,—and the three were engaged commenting on the inexplicable conduct of the Half-pay, the object of their discourse was seen stumping through the main

street of "The Town of the Cascades," along which he hurried with unprecedented velocity.

His midday walk through the main street had been heretofore a leisurely promenade, no business on hand requiring haste. To be sure, his discourse was curt and scanty, but his salutation of "Maw—maw," was frequent; his shake of the hand with this or that neighbour was hearty, at times over-hearty, the owner of the hand wincing from the violence of the pressure, while his salutes to those less intimate, and to the fair sex particularly, were constant.

On the present occasion he pressed onward at the top of his speed, looking neither to the right nor left, noticing no one. He went with his head thrown back, and he stared directly before him, at something above the elevation of his eyes; something discernible to his mental vision.

A rumour had spread through "The Town of the Cascades" of some *mêlée* on the bridge, in which the Colonel had been the principal actor. Much excitement prevailed in consequence, and people were all

alive examining each other as to the nature and extent of the scuffle that had taken place. So that when the reputed hero of the fight was seen hurrying onward as described, he became an object of eager scrutiny and speculation.

Nick Mahaffy was standing at his shop-door, his stumpy legs wide apart, and both his hands thrust deep into his waistcoat pockets. The Half-pay took no more notice of Nick Mahaffy than if he were a nonentity, and not the head man of the town. Nick Mahaffy took two straddling steps from his door into the street, and knitting his brows, and pursing his lips, he gazed haughtily, and with ruffled dignity, after the uncourteous passer-by. Paddy Dreelan, Nick Mahaffy's satellite, came forth, because Nick Mahaffy had come forth, and he strained his neck to look after the hurrying Half-pay, because Nick Mahaffy looked after him.

Toby Purcell was lolling against the door jambs of the "McMahon Arms" (Toby's hotel was seldom over-thronged), and Toby, a cynical leer playing round his mouth and glancing from his eyes, stooped

forward to scan the progress of the hurrying Colonel, who passed him without the slightest recognition.

Paddy Dreelan crossed over to Nick Mahaffy ; and Toby Purcell joined them. And others came ; and there was a knot,—all eyes in the knot following the motions of the Half-pay.

On went the Half-pay without abatement of speed, on, nearly to the termination of the main street. Sharp he turned to the left, into a lane or *cul-de-sac*, entered, as one of the aborigines described it, “through a square archway ;” that is to say, the houses on either side were continued above the entrance, so that the entrance was not through an archway at all. Half a dozen small houses were in this lane, and it was called “Bow-lane,” why so called no one could tell me, and there was no sign of bow or arrow in its locale, to direct my conjectures.

“Ha !—by the piper that played before Moses,” suggested Toby Purcell, “he’s going to Paddy Gow to have the leg scoured out, and put in shooting order. And if there doesn’t be murther, then I’m a false prophet.”

This shrewd guess put forth by Toby Purcell requires explanation.

Paddy Gow, or Paddy the smith, lived in Bow-lane, entered from the main street through the "square archway." The Cyclopean breathing of Paddy Gow's bellows, the roaring of Paddy Gow's forge-fire, and the din of Paddy Gow's anvil monopolized the entire resonance of Bow-lane beyond the "square archway." Paddy Gow was the cunning artificer who had prepared the blunderbuss-barrel as a substitute for part of the Half-pay's original wooden leg. This proof of Paddy Gow's skill as a worker in metals was generally known, and hence Toby Purcell's assertion was not without a groundwork of probability.

As suddenly as he had been lost to view, the Half-pay emerged from Bow-lane, passing of course again under the "square archway." Over his left shoulder, the handle grasped firmly in his right hand, he carried a good-sized sledge-hammer ; not Paddy Gow's large sledge, which required two sinewy arms

to wield it, but Paddy Gow's half-and-half—between his hammer and his two-handed sledge.

"Oh!—by the powers of pewter!" ejaculated Toby Purcell; "if he isn't going to sledge somebody's skull, I'm a jack-snipe."

"The man is stark mad. I insist on it; he's stark mad," dictated Nick Mahaffy.

"Upon my word and credit," assented Paddy Dreelan, sententiously and impressively, "he has the look of a crature that took leave of his senses."

There were other apt commentaries which I have not time now to notice.

The person so critically scrutinized rapidly approached. To judge from the line of forced march he was pursuing it was his intention to keep wide of his assembled neighbours. When within a pace or two he diverged from his course, as if a sudden squall had taken him aback, and right through the group of observers did he dash. To the utter consternation of Paddy Dreelan, he came full tilt against the short, burly Nick Mahaffy, who

was too inactive, and indeed too dignified, to jump to one side as the others had done, and but for the timely aid of Paddy the important Nick Mahaffy would have been overturned. It was the conclusion, however, that the offender had been rude without intention;—Nick Mahaffy and his companions had not been observed by him, it was supposed, his gaze being fixed on some aerial object at a considerable elevation, and at a distance.

“’Twas a narrow escape I had,” whispered Toby Purcell; “the iron leg was within an inch of my toes.”

“What is he about at all?” queried one of the lookers-on, whispering, as Toby Purcell had done.

“Whatever he’s on for,” Toby Purcell answered, “there’s fun in him—that I’d swear for. He has the wag in his head,—the only sign of humour about him at any time.”

And Toby Purcell was right. There was a characteristic vibration of the Half-pay’s head, and this motion was produced now, as at other times, by the effort to suppress the silent laughter he indulged in

whenever it circulated with increased velocity. The Half-pay knew right well he had succeeded in taxing the sagacity of the group he had, not undesignedly, disturbed. And this knowledge was sufficient to make him forget for a while his previous sternness.

“Come here, Jack.”

Toby Purcell addressed one of those tatterdemalions to be found in every part of Ireland where there is an inn or house of “entertainment,” or a public vehicle of any kind, who issue forth in the morning without any particular object in view ;—who spend nearly the entire day lolling listlessly in thoroughfares and at corners ;—who are remarkable for keenness of eye and accuracy of observation ;—and who spring at once into energy and briskness when any chance employment offers.

“Jack, do you see the Colonel ?”

“Ha, ha !—I do, Misther Purcell, I do. To be sure I do.”

“Jack, do you see that there’s a sledge-hammer over the Colonel’s shoulder ?”

“Ha, ha !—I see the sledge-hammer plain,

Misther Purcell. The sight of my eyes is good, Misther Purcell, Lord be praised."

"Go now, Jack, and don't lose sight of the Colonel. Bring word to us here where he goes to, and what he does with himself and the sledgehammer. We'll wait here for you, Jack. Mind your points now."

Jack made no bargain as to recompense. Jack always preferred to undertake a job without compact; he relied on his powers of persuasion when his mission had been fulfilled. Jack had a deformed foot, and he progressed by a series of jumps, the stick that aided him being in front of his person. Jack pulled the peak of his remnant of a cap by way of salutation, and hopped off on his errand.

Fifteen minutes or so might have elapsed when the knot of inquisitors, so athirst for intelligence, observed Jack returning. He came at his top speed;—he could hop marvellously fast, every bone and muscle twisting as he hopped. I shall give the result of his "*reconnaissance*" in his own words. I should however remark, that Jack paused at every

sentence of his narrative, that each distinct occurrence might be impressed the more strongly on his hearers, and be the more fully appreciated.

“Over the bridge the Colonel went.”—A pause.

“And he crossed the bridge. I seen him crossing over with my two eyes.”—Pause.

“Up he climbed, the poor man, and hard set he was, the poor man. An’ he climbed until he stud fornent the dure of his own house. You know where his own house is, Misther Purcell? I b’lieve ye all know where the Curnel’s house is, gentlemen?”—Pause.

“When he was before the dure of his own house, gentlemen, he put his stick between his knees this way—this way.”

“He has but one knee,” remarked Toby Purcell.

“I think he has two. No matter—he put the stick this way; an’ he lifted down the sledge-hammer from his shoulder with his two hands. You may b’lieve me; I’m not telling a word of lie. I was leaning over the bridge looking up at him. I was, gentlemen; ’tis the thruth I’m tellin’.”—Pause.

“‘Ha, ha!’ says I to myself, ‘by this an’ by that, he’s goin’ to make pipe stoppers of the dure.’”—
Pause.

“Did he—did he make pipe-stoppers of it?”
The question was impatiently put.

“Wait till I tell ye. He laid the sledge-hammer down by his feet—”

“He has but one foot.”

“Oh, sure enough, thin, Mистер Purcell, you’re right. He *has* but one fut, the poor man. Well, he laid the sledge-hammer down by his one fut— an’ he tuk up his stick, an’ he malleted at the dure till you’d think he’d smash it. I wondher you didn’t hear the noise down here, he malleted so hard.”—Pause.

“He malleted an’ he malleted until the dure was pulled wide open.”—Pause.

“An’ he lifted up the sledge-hammer, he did, no doubt about it. An’ he put it on his shouldher again. An’ he—went in over the threshold. An’ the dure was shut out—with a bang—that shuck the bridge I was standing on.”

"Is that all you saw, Jack?"

"That's all, gentlemen ; that's all."

And so, the laudable thirst for information felt so keenly by the inquisitors of "The Town of the Cascades" was still unslaked.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT THE COLONEL WAS DOING IN HIS OWN HOUSE.

THE three tipplers, Ned Culkin, Tom O'Loughlin, and our friend the Half-pay were three bachelors, irresponsible for any one but themselves. And so much the better.

In this respect they were less morally blameable than their late adherent Richard O'Meara, who had desecrated the altars of his household gods. Neither Ned Culkin, nor Tom O'Loughlin, nor the Half-pay had household gods to build altars for. And so they had no household altars in their half-dilapidated little houses.

The three tippling bachelors were economical in their way. Ned Culkin was economical, because,

out of every five shillings he could reckon on, four never entered the house at all. Tom O'Loughlin was economical from sheer necessity ;—no one could extract money from an empty purse. The Half-pay was domestically economical for reasons best known to himself ;—which reasons the ablest miners in “The Town of the Cascades” were unable to bring to the surface.

I have given the three neighbours due credit for their domestic saving. One evidence thereof I adduce, and the circumstance will also prove the friendly terms on which they lived.

The three tippling bachelors had come to the understanding that one elderly woman, Bridget Scallon by name, was sufficient to discharge the household duties of all three. Bridget Scallon was a widow beyond her fortieth year. She was bleary eyed ; no one could fault her on this account, her hours for regular sleep being but few. She was slovenly in her dress ;—no wonder again,—what time could she devote to her toilette with her three separate establishments to attend to ? She wore

shoes and stockings on Sunday only ;—so much the better ; she could race from house to house more nimbly with bare feet than if those feet were encumbered.

My friend, Mary Hanrahan, in her own vein of quiet humour, gave me an insight into the arrangements of the tipplers, under favour of which the wiry, but ever scrambling and 'grumbling Bridget Scallon succeeded in serving three masters.

“ 'Twas aisy enough,” she said, “ to plaze the gauger. A dhrink of cool wather 'from the spring was a hearty breakfast to him, an' he'd snap up a few mouthfuls by way of a dinner, any time he got it ;—a chop of mutton well scalded with pepper and salt, or a pig's crubeen, half salt, didn't take much time in the cooking. The half of a penny bun, and a little cup of milk, was the decayed gentleman's breakfast ; the other half of the penny bun, with a couple of eggs or a salt herring, gave him a grand dinner. The gauger, Michael told me, was, like the woodcock, nourished on the dhrink ; he said the woodcocks lived all out on bog water, and

the gauger on the liquor. The decayed gentleman would have stood his own friend better in the way of aiting if he could get credit anywhere through the town, but, for the most part, if he was to turn his pockets inside out 'twould be no gains to him. The Curnel was the only one of Bridget's three masthers that took care of himself. Very sthrong tea—very sthrong tea entirely—he'd have in the mornin', an', for *both* their sakes, Bridget made it to his liking. 'Twas the tea that kept Bridget awake and lively for twenty hours out of the twenty-four, and the Curnel's teapot was her best friend. When it was getting weak, she towld me, poor woman, a dhrop of spirits out of the gauger's bottle or the Curnel's bottle made it as sthrong as ever,—and there was no scarcity of that with the gauger or the Curnel. Three eggs the Curnel scooped clean out every morning with his sthrong tea, and his half loaf; and then Bridget had no more to provide for him. His dinner came cooked to him from the widow-woman's. Not one of Bridget's three masthers minded about cobwebs,

or dust, or anything that way, and she lost little time cleaning or sweeping. So you see, with the help of the sthrong tea, seasoned from the bottle, poor Bridget was able to meet all calls."

Between three and four o'clock the day of the rencounter on the bridge, Tom O'Loughlin gave three modest taps at the Half-pay's door. I have said this door was knockerless;—the knocker was indeed gone, but the iron knob belonging to it remained. With a stone suitable for his purpose, Tom O'Loughlin struck this knob. A plebeian, seeking admittance, would have given a vigorous single bang; a fellow with money in his pocket—Nick Mahaffy, for instance—might claim attention by a resounding tantarare. Tom O'Loughlin was not a plebeian, and as far as money was concerned,—*that* was out of the question. So he temporized by tapping the knob timidly three times.

Bridget Scallon blinked her inflamed eyes at him as she answered his summons.

"I'm nothing beyond the relics of a harassed

owld woman," she whined, "one pulling me one way, another, another way, the night as well as the day, all the same. There isn't as much for you as a scrap that would lie in a fippeny-piece."

"I have dined, Bridget."

"The more your luck. I hadn't a crumb for you."

"I came to speak to the Colonel, Bridget. He is within, I believe?"

"Within he is, but what to make of his doings is to me a mysthery."

"What are they, Bridget?"

"'Tis perplexin' my owld brain. Seein' is b'lievin', they say,—but until I see it I won't give in to it. Of all the men that ever breathed the breath of life, for him to do it!—"

"What, Bridget?"

"I don't suppose,"—Bridget spoke rather in soliloquy,—“that the priest that goes about layin' his curse on the liquor would bring himself to do it. No, he wouldn't be guilty of the like. But to

think that the Curnel would commit sich a deadly mortal sin!—I won't b'lieve it till I see it; no, I won't."

"Hallo, hallo!"

It was the Half-pay's stentorian bellow that caused Bridget Scallon to jump round, and scamper inward, leaving Tom O'Loughlin bewildered by her unfinished communication.

In the all but nude little parlour off the hall, the creeping Tom found his neighbour. The sledge-hammer that had caused such perplexity to the group of inquisitors in the main street was on the floor, and leaning against the wall was the blackthorn that had so naively begun the reformation of Richard O'Meara.

The Half-pay had put down the sledge-hammer, and placed the blackthorn at rest, to enable him to use both hands in the work he was engaged at. Bridget Scallon was bent nearly double, and her master Number One was in the act of depositing on her back a goodly-sized keg, which, to judge by the exertion required on her part, and also by the

exclamation forced out from Bridget, as it was fixed, not over-gently, in its position, was a weighty keg as well as a good sized one.

With great energy and despatch the Half-pay, holding the keg in its place with one hand, gathered up the carrier's old gown, and therewith formed an *appui* for her burthen, by passing it over her shoulder, fixing it in her clutch, and riveting her fingers on it. He then stepped back from her, and contemplated his work with entire satisfaction. He grasped his cudgel, he took up the sledge-hammer, and flung it across his shoulder.

"Trot!" he barked.

And Bridget, obedient to the command, wheeled round, and did trot. She was obliged to proceed, however, in her bent position. It was plain to understand she must break down if her journey were a lengthened one.

"Maw!" said the Half-pay, recognizing Tom O'Loughlin's presence. "Come." And he hastened on as Bridget Scallon's escort.

Out into the little yard behind the shabby-gen-

teel house did the tottering Bridget trot. There was a bench in this little yard, overshadowed with trees. On this bench the Half-pay used to lounge at times to smoke his pipe. There was a partial view of the river from this resting-place; it looked directly towards the hill-top churchyard noticed in our early Chapters. There was a glimpse of the town too, and the dash of the water below the bridge was heard. In truth it was a pleasant spot for a lounge and a smoke.

This bench Bridget, of her own accord, approached. She wheeled round and sat down, and uttering a moan of relief, rested the keg on it. The Half-pay hastened over, and assisted her to fix it there firmly.

Arranged three deep, to the right and left of the bench, was a goodly company of black bottles, sealed and corked. These had been ranged in military array, so that when Bridget's fardel had taken its prominent position, the bottles had all the appearance of a guard attendant on it.

The Half-pay, shouldering his sledge-hammer,

wheeled quickly round and confronted Tom O'Loughlin. He gave his composite leg a resolute punch downwards, delving the ferruled end of his cudgel into the ground at the same time. He looked straight into the eyes of his neighbour, with even more than usual intensity, and beyond yea or nay the interior cachinnation in which he frequently indulged was in excess, and flowed in a brisk current.

"Hallo!" he cried. And the hallo! from its suddenness and vigour, startled Tom O'Loughlin, to whom it was addressed.

With the reader's permission, I will give the Half-pay's thoughts in words, as they passed rapidly his mind.

"All preliminaries are arranged so far," he informed himself; "well arranged—all ready for assault. I took my oath to that good-hearted poor fellow, Michael Hanrahan, that liquor of any shape should never pass down my throat again. And the oath I'll keep."

At this point of his mental colloquy with himself leg and stick were delved down.

"I engaged to Michael that I would compel others to lead as sober a life as myself. And this engagement also I'll keep—or I'll know for what."

Here his thoughts diverged; the stream of interior cachinnation was unsluiced, and eddied and whirled in a rapid stream.

"Ha, ha!—I have bewildered the wits of the whole town to-day. Ha, ha!—ho, ho! What in the name of heaven could the Colonel, as they have named me, want with the sledge-hammer he carried on his shoulders? Ha, ha! ho, ho!—ho, ho! Bridget Scallon thinks her Colonel is a bedlamite. Ho, ho! And if this unfortunate fellow here is not perplexed at my movements, I'm a colonel in downright earnest. Ha, ha!—ho, ho, ho! I know well what he's come for. But I am ready to keep my promise to Michael Hanrahan—as he shall see."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DUEL.

IN answer to the "hallo!" that had made him bound, Tom O'Loughlin proceeded to discharge his mission. I should remark that the decayed gentleman's manner was much altered during his present conference with the Half-pay. Somewhat of the spirit and demeanour of his early days returned to him,—of those days when he was a pleasant, hearty fellow, with money to waste, and no prevoyance of future pauperism.

"I come on a rather unpleasant business, Colonel," he said.

"What?"

"This day, Colonel,—I regret I was there to

witness it,—you publicly degraded our mutual friend, Mr. Richard O'Meara."

"Whaled him—well?"

"You struck him with your stick, on the public bridge of this town."

"He'll get—more—if—" the Half-pay did not finish this sentence.

"It is scarcely necessary for me to say, Colonel, that a public insult of this nature must be as publicly acknowledged and apologized for,—or the offending party must—"

"Fight?"

Tom O'Loughlin bowed, and then looked at the Half-pay with an air by no means cringing.

"As the friend of Mr. O'Meara, Colonel, I am here to require that you will make a public apology for the public insult given."

"Won't!"

"Then, Colonel, it only remains for me to act as Mr. Richard O'Meara's friend. I have not the honour, Colonel, of knowing your name, I presume you will have no objection to give it me?"

"Name—is—"

While pronouncing these words the Half-pay whirled round ; he allowed his cudgel to fall, and wielded the sledge-hammer with both hands.

"*Paddy*—WHACK!" he shouted. And at the word "Whack," which surname he assumed for the occasion, he stove in the head of the keg Bridget Scallon had placed on the bench.

"*Paddy*—Whack!" he continued to shout out. And at every repetition of the euphonious surname, he dealt his blows vigorously on the body-guard of black bottles—until not one remained unbroken.

From keg and bottles a united stream of potteen flowed about the yard, thence into the sewer, and from the sewer into the river. The atmosphere was redolent with the stinging effluvia of potteen ;—and Toby Purcell assured me that the water of the river was converted into grog, and that an angler then engaged in his pastime filled his panfier in a twinkling, so heedless and giddy had the fish become by the influence of the admixture. "In fact," Toby

Purcell affirmed, "the trouts became royally drunk, every one of them."

The astonishment, the more than astonishment of Tom O'Loughlin and Bridget Scallon was excessive. It was a mingled sensation of horror and grief that overwhelmed them. The grief of both was however thoroughly selfish. Tom O'Loughlin looked on with a melancholy visage while the inspiring principle of his existence, that raised him nightly from his shivering sense of pauperism to forgetfulness and spreeishness, was wantonly wasted. And Bridget Scallon saw with a sad heart the never-failing strengthener of her tea gurgling away,—if we take Toby Purcell's authority, to tipsify the fishes.

"Oh, Colonel, Colonel," said Tom O'Loughlin, "you have destroyed——"

"The Devil!—Not — drunk — again,— you—he!"

And the Half-pay pointed in the direction of Richard O'Meara's cottage. Tom O'Loughlin sighed deeply.

"Well, well, Colonel!—permit me now to finish the affair that has brought me here. You decline to apologize?"

"I do."

"Then be good enough to refer me to a friend with whom I may arrange the preliminaries of the meeting. Who is to be your friend, Colonel, for the occasion?"

"Your—self!"

"Colonel! I am here as Mr. O'Meara's friend. It would give me pleasure to discharge the like duty for you on another occasion. But, as you perceive, I cannot do so now."

"Must!"

"Oh, Colonel, permit me to point out to you—"

"Won't!—Stay."

The Half-pay hastened off. From a compartment of his mysterious portmanteau he took out, carefully covered in woollen casings, two long-barrelled pistols, linked together by a strap. These he flung across his shoulder. From the same receptacle he

extracted a small powder flask, having a bottom to screw off, in which were bullets and caps. Thus provided for, he presented himself before Richard O'Meara's friend.

"Ready?" he shouted.

As a matter of course, Tom O'Loughlin declined to be a party to such precipitancy. Nor would he consent to fill the part of second to the challenged as well as to the challenger. The Half-pay insisted on it, however, and the decayed gentleman departed to consult his principal.

Richard O'Meara, not free from the excitement of drink, and yet determined, as he professed, "to send the disabled old ruffian home on a door, stiff and stark," was tickled by the oddity of the Colonel's proposal, and he also decided that Tom O'Loughlin should discharge the unprecedented office in the history of duelling, of a go-between to both combatants. Tom, for good reasons of his own, had no mind to come to a misunderstanding with either, and so he finally agreed.

The sun, not yet risen from his couch, was but

glancing upwards with eyes half open, when Richard O'Meara, accompanied by the decayed gentleman, was on his way to the "sod." The spot selected was, in this instance, misnamed "a sod," there being no sod whatever. The rencounter, from which the Half-pay was to be "sent home stiff and stark," was to take place beyond the "village of the Bornochs," close by the sea-side, on a strip of smooth sandy beach. The battle-ground was chosen because of its seclusion, the affair being conducted with the greatest privacy, that the deadly intent of the challenger might not be interrupted.

The decayed gentleman and his original principal had but partially slept off the previous night's debauch, and they blinked like owls overtaken by the light of day. The little sandy beach they had to gain was more than two Irish miles distant from "The Town of the Cascades." It was yet grey morning when they reached it. Even at that very early hour, there stood the Half-pay, as erect, and as immovable as a post.

Over his shoulders hung his pistols, still in their

cases ; and he had provided himself with a flat stone on which the muzzle of his leg rested, to prevent it from sinking into the yielding sand.

"The Colonel is no flincher, I see," Richard O'Meara carelessly remarked. "The quicker we proceed to business the better."

Tom O'Loughlin was soon busy as the manager of the performance. He shook the Half-pay's hand warmly, in answer to his salutation of "Maw, maw !" He loaded the Half-pay's pistols with the skill of a veteran duellist. Scanning the ground with experienced eye, he saw that his principal Number Two was unfavourably placed ; there was a rock behind him that imparted too much of the character of a target to the present object of his arrangement. The Half-pay removed without objection to a fitter position. As he went along his leg sunk deep, and with some difficulty he drew it up at every step. Tom O'Loughlin did not fail to appreciate the utility of the flat stone, and he adjusted it as before. Tom O'Loughlin proved by his conduct that he was

the soul of honour and fair duelling, and were such decayed gentlemen available on all similar occasions, I see no necessity why one person more than is really necessary should be engaged to arrange a duelling rencounter.

Taking the Half-pay as his starting post, Tom stepped twelve paces, an exact yard to each pace. It was not his first essay, and he could step three feet accurately. At twelve paces distant from the Half-pay, Tom placed his principal Number One.

The Second, or, more properly in this instance, the Third, was of course to give the word and make the signal for attack. He retired somewhat out of the range of bullets.

“Ready—Present—Fire!” he cried, in a loud, distinct voice, and he dropped his glove.

Either both had fired at the exact same instant, or there had been but one shot. Tom glanced from combatant to combatant. They both stood erect; neither faltered. He saw the Half-pay hastily raise

his hand to his cheek, look at it, and then flourish his cudgel above his head. Tom subsequently discovered that the ball from Richard O'Meara's weapon had passed so close to his opponent's jaw, that a gap, marking its course, was cut through the umbrageous whisker that covered it. The Half-pay had barely escaped his threatened fate of being sent home on a door.

Startled by the report of the pistol, the gulls in a neighbouring cliff flew about screaming. One more inquisitive and bolder than the others came sailing over the head of Tom O'Loughlin's principal Number One. The Half-pay raised his arm rapidly and fired. The bird fell dead at Richard O'Meara's feet. Little doubt could there be that had the same bullet been sped against his opponent, the Half-pay would not have been the party doomed "to go home on a door."

The duel, according to all the laws of honour, so called, was terminated. The Half-pay had stood the fire of his opponent, and had not returned it.

And so, neither of the decayed gentleman's principals went home "on a door."

So far it will be seen that the plan of Michael Hanrahan and his Mary had been productive of little good result.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DROOPING FLOWER.

"GOODNESS gracious knows," said Mary Hanrahan, clasping her hands within each other, placing them before her chest, rocking her person, and speaking in a plaintive tone—

"Goodness gracious knows, Michael an' myself supposed we were a pair of Solomons. We thought that if the Curnel turned from his dhrinking, that his example would work wondhers. We knew that our poor man had a mighty liking entirely for the Curnel, an' 'twas the thought of our wiseacre heads that the Curnel would coax him to play 'follow the leader,' as Michael called it. It never once came across

our minds—how could it?—that he'd begin to convert our poor gone astray man by whacking him with his heavy stick. No, no. Such a notion never came near either of us."

Mary paused, and reflected for a moment. Her face had been serious and somewhat sad. The expression relaxed, and when she spoke again there was a tendency to a smile about her mouth and eyes.

"Michael an' myself were young," she said, "an' 'tis visible to me now we hadn't the sense we thought we had. I was quite certain, an' I wouldn't have b'lieved the priest to the contrary, that my poor Michael couldn't go astray. An' Michael was all out as certain that Mary, myself you know, was a pattern of wisdom. Indeed we were both in the wrong, as you can't help thinking, I'm sure.—An' I'll tell you what," she added, her smile becoming more positive, "I'm greatly inclined to think that from that day to this, the stock of sense we raked together between us wouldn't make a stack in our haggart. But for all that, we were as loving, an'

as proud of our harvest, thanks be to God, as if we were wiser an' richer people.

"We were downright certain—Michael an' myself—when we laid our heads together, that we were doing all for the best—goodness gracious knows we were! But I'm grieved to tell you—"

Her smile faded away, and her sad look returned—

"I'm grieved to tell you that 'twas the mischief, an' not the good we brought about. Our poor deluded man went on worser an' worser from the moment the Curnel's stick welted his shoulders. With fury in his eyes, an' with a loud, angry tongue, he spoke to our darling. He called her by ugly names, an' he told her she had made complaints of him to sthrangers, an' joined his enemies against him. When she fell on her knees before him, as white as the whitest linen, an' shivering like the leaves of the aspen tree, he said to her that she was a liar, an' a thraitor to him. Poor soul!—you'd pity her if there was a heart of stone within you. Indeed you would—pity her."

The tears fell fast along Mary's cheeks at the recollection of what she described.

"Day by day she pined away and dhrooped. She cried herself to sleep in the night, an' she cried off an' on all the day. Oh!—you'd pity her! an' little wondher that she cried herself to sleep; little wondher that the tears came out undher the eyelids, along her cheeks, when they were closed in the sleep of wearisomeness! Often and often I saw them bursting out, an' wiped them away, as I sat watching by her. Little wondher it was—an' I didn't wondher at it—that the sad moans came from her aching bosom while she lay dozing! Her starts of sleep were short,—an' small wondher did I make of it, when she'd waken herself with the sound of her own lamentations, an' throw her arms round my neck, an' fell to crying again.

"The Lord be merciful to her soul! She had real cause to be sorrowful! If 'twas a thing there was no scalding of the heart, from the loss of her poor deluded husband's love an' tenderness, there was enough of other sorrow around her heart. Our

little baby died!—our darling couldn't nurse him, an' he died! An' then the other child,—a little girl it was of two years old,—died too. Two more beautiful, wax-work little things you couldn't see. There was a month from the death of the one to the death of the other. Surely—surely our darling had cause for sorrow!"

"How did their father seem to take their death, Mary?"

"I saw that he was frightened; but he only drank the harder,—to drown his thoughts, Michael said it was. The Lord forgive him!—for he's gone before his Judge! May he be merciful to him, for he was a good poor fellow afther all, if it wasn't for the dhrink.

"All in my power I did to soothe an' comfort our sufferer. She'd listen without saying one word;—an' she'd cry—cry—cry! In her brightest days our darling was not sthrong or sturdy. She was delicate in her body; an' she was like a bird, merry an' blithesome, but fearful in herself an' shy. 'Twas easy to startle her and terrify her. 'Twas plain to

see she couldn't hold out against her sorrow. Day by day she drooped an' pined away.

"'Tis my belief," said Mary, after a pause, "'tis my belief the tendherest heart—the heart that has the love the deepest—is the easiest to be broken. I know there are women in the world that would rise up against ill-usage, and pay it back to the giver. I'd do that, I think: I think I would. I give thanks I never got cause to stand up for my self,—no, never,—but I think I'd do it. But our darling was not one of my sort, an' the heart broke within her."

Mary ceased speaking. She clasped her hands very tightly, and the rocking of her person became continuous. She closed her eyes, her lips moved, and for some time it appeared to me that she was praying inaudibly.

After a considerable pause, she opened her eyes, sighed deeply, but remained silent.

"Your story is a sad one, Mary."

"Isn't it now, Sir, very, very sad?"

"Indeed it is."

There was another pause.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SORE AND PLEASANT RETROSPECTIONS.

“How did the unhappy victim of intemperance behave to Michael?” I asked of Mary.

Mary sighed again—a lengthened sigh—before she answered me.

“Ah, then, indeed they went on bad enough together. Michael was forced to be hiding the most of the day, out of his sight entirely. The poor ‘victim of intemperance,’ I think you called him?”

I nodded assent.

“An’ a good name it is to give him. The poor victim was dangerous to meet with often. He forgot all Michael’s care of him, and Michael’s love for him!—he did indeed. Ah, then, it often made me wonder. Many a time did I turn it over in my

mind, without being able to find out a downright reason for it at all. You're a man that got a reasonable share of schooling, if I'm not greatly astray in my reckoning?"

"I did, Mary ; a reasonable share of schooling, as you say."

"Ah! so I thought. An' I see myself, you have more of the world's craft in you than Michael or I had,—or ever will have, if we were to put both our shares together."

Mary's usual smile partly returned as she paid me this compliment.

"Thank you, Mary, for your high opinion of me."

"Who knows but you could explain to me how it came to pass that our unhappy victim, as you called him, showed a greater dislike to those he had the love for, than he had for strangers he didn't care a rush for? How did it happen that to our darling, an' to his childre, an' to his foster-brother that doated on him, he was cross an' hard-hearted ; an' for all that he could laugh, and shout out, and

sing with such ones as the shivering gauger an' the decayed gentleman? Often an' often it perplexed me to undherstand this. Who knows but that you, with your schooling an' your world's wisdom, can unriddle it for me?"

Mary's question, although apparently paradoxical, was not profound; yet it created a necessity for reflection.

Mary awaited my reply.

"Mary, have you heard it said that people scarcely ever forgive those they have injured, although they may forgive their worst enemies?"

"Well—Michael never said anything about that to me that I bring to mind. We are ordered, I know, not to hate any one, an' we are to pray for our enemies. The prayer is often said backwards, I'm afraid. But why we'd dislike a body because we do him a harm, is a brain-puzzler to me."

"Yet, it is so, Mary. We know that those we injure will be revengeful towards us."

"And why not?—barring they are good Christians entirely, entirely?"

"And, because we know they will be resentful towards us, we fear them: we regard them as our enemies, and dislike them as such."

"Ah, then!—may-be so."

"There is another cause, Mary, why we dislike those we have injured."

"I see I didn't mistake when I said you had the schooling an' the worldly craft. I'd like to know the other cause, Sir, if you haven't any objection."

"When we see the person we have injured, or when we reflect on the wrong we have done him, conscience stings us painfully, and the sting is the more intolerable, the greater the injury we have inflicted——."

"Well, well, well!—let me ponder awhile. Supposing that you're a landlord, an' that you take the land from a poor creature that has nothing else to get his living from, an' that you turn him out of house an' land, an' send him poor and penniless on the world, himself, an' his wife, an' his flock of childre:—you think he won't forget it to you, an' you don't like a bone in his skin."

"Precisely so, Mary;—you have my meaning."

I have truthfully given the ethical analysis wrought out between Mary Hanrahan and myself; and I will here forestall the reader's smile at my expense by acknowledging that I was urged by my vanity to prove to Mary that I was able to "unriddle" her riddle. I wished to justify to her her flattering appreciation of my "worldly craft and schooling." I thought I had gained my point, and was self-complacent thereon.

"And now, Mary," I continued, laying my finger on her shoulder, "I will show you how it is that our reasoning bears on the question you have asked me. You seek to know why it was that your 'victim of intemperance,'—you seem to approve of the term?"—

"It fits him like a glove."

"Why your victim of intemperance was more harsh to those he had loved than to strangers.

"Your victim of intemperance was obliged to acknowledge to himself that he had injured and

outraged his pure and affectionate wife; that in return for her love and devotion, he had repaid her by slight, perhaps by falsehood even. When her wasted form, and her pale, terrified face met his eye, conscience whispered to him—with a whisper louder in his ear than the thunder-clap—that the withering of her beauty, and the shattering of her health was his work. And, Mary, he could shout and sing with the decayed gentleman, because he had done *him* no injury; and he was harsh and cruel towards his wife because he could not close his ears against the cries of conscience. Do I make myself understood, Mary?" I asked, with the impressive manner of a lecturer.

"Ah, then! indeed I can't say, Sir, that I understand you all out entirely. But no blame—you know I haven't the craft or the schooling."

There was a sly undervaluing of my doctrine in the backward motion of Mary's head, and in her look, that humbled my self-complacency considerably.

"I don't say but your words may be right enough.

But I'll tell you my notion: it isn't mine all out, but Michael's. I think that the grace of God never shields the dhrinking man, an' that he falls entirely into the power of the worker of all evil. May heaven guard us from temptation!" she reverently added, forming the sign of the cross with her thumb on forehead, lips, and breast.

"Well, Mary, yours may be the shortest and best explanation, after all," I said, modestly.

"Indeed, I think so, myself. 'Tis the plainest to me, at any rate."

There was a pause in our conference.

"Mary, were the Colonel and Richard O'Meara reconciled to each other?"

"They never were, Sir. Michael was forced to beg an' pray of the Curnel to keep out of the victim's way, an' not to come to our place any more. Michael and myself had the dhread on us they'd fly at aich other like game-cocks. The Curnel was hot an' peppery, as we had good reason to know; an' that the victim wouldn't take another whacking without paying the score back again 'twas aisy to

foretell. The Curnel wasn't a bit cute—what good did *our* cuteness do us, I wondher? The Curnel had no skill in laying plans;—if we weren't such planners, poor Michael an' myself, maybe we'd be better off. But we turned the Curnel into a chip in porridge—neither harm nor good, poor man."

"And did the Colonel keep his resolution of total abstinence from liquor?"

"He never let a dhrop of anything sthronger than tay cross his lips as long as he stopped among us.

"Well, well," said Mary, after she had in silence gazed down for a while at the billows that broke in white foam against the little beach beneath our "cobbey house" in the cliff—

"Well, well, 'tis a comfort to bring to mind the times we had before our grief came on us. The Curnel was the apple of our eye to us. Every day that he got up, he paid us a visit. There was our poor dog Teague that's no more—may—I was going to say,—'may his soul rest in peace,' only I be-thought of myself in time. We knew by Teague

always when the Curnel was coming. Teague would hear the punch, punch, of the Curnel's leg—ay, I'm sure two miles away. Supposing that he was taking his doze on the hall-mat, or outside the door in the sun, he'd rouse himself up with a jump an' he'd cock his ears, an' he'd listen.

“‘Teague snuffs the Curnel, maybe,’ Michael would say. An’ sure enough, the poor dog would throt down the garden-walk to the gate;—an’ he’d stand on his hind legs, an’ he’d rise the latch, an’ he’d go down the road an’ he’d wait there, wagging his tail. An’ in six or seven minutes or so, the Curnel would be seen forcing his way on. An’ my poor Teague would trot off to meet him. The Curnel tutored the dog to shake hands with him every day. He’d say ‘Paw!’ to Teague, an’ my poor Teague would sit himself down, an’ he’d laugh up in the Curnel’s face—ay, as plain as you could laugh yourself, if you were in humour for it. An’ you never saw the gentleman that would athretch out his hand in a nater manner;—this way—”

And Mary, giving her right hand a twirl extended it towards me.

“This way he’d give out his paw, and the Curnel would shake hands with him most heartily, to be sure. I’m not telling you one word of untruth—my own eyes saw the meeting between them as often as I have fingers and toes—ay, indeed,—oftener by far.

“Well, Sir, Teague an’ the Curnel would march up together to the cottage. The Curnel would make a grand salute to our darling, an’ say, ‘Maw—Ma-dame!’ An’ then he’d stare at her for half-an-hour or more, without opening his mouth again, till she’d grow fidgety. He’d toss up the baby, an’ the baby would crow for him,—an’ our young Dicky he’d sit riding on his leg. And all the time you’d say he was a cross-grained looking man. But the childre an’ Teague an’ all of us took delight in him. After a while he’d take Dicky by the hand; an’ Teague, an’ Dicky, an’ the Curnel would march off together. Either Michael or myself—often Michael an’ myself—glad of the

excuse, you know, would follow afther them, side-by-side. The Curnel, if you please, had thrained Masther Dicky to fire off his leg. It would amuse you, indeed, if you were to see the brave little boy and the Curnel together. You never saw a pair on a cleverer understanding together than our manly, bowld Dicky an' the Curnel. 'Tis often I saw the Curnel winking his left eye at Dicky till you'd think he'd glue it together never to open it again. As sure as the wink was winked, an' that was every fine day, Dicky would take patthorn by his teacher, an' wink as hard as the Curnel himself. An' then away they'd go on their walk, with Teague at their heels, or trotting on before them. I towld you, I think, that the Curnel had thrained our Dicky to shoot off his leg. The Curnel would stick out his leg, this way—"

Mary fixed her own leg on a rock directly opposite to her as she sat, that I might have ocular evidence of the Colonel's plan of proceeding.

—"An' Teague would sit down with a phiz as serious as if he was going to preach a sermon."

"Then you'd see Dicky, every joint in his body alive, stuffing the powder into the leg. An' then he'd jump up an' sit straddle-legs on it, an' he'd set it going. An' the smoke an' the fire would come out of it surprising to see, an' if you were within hearing the noise would frighten you. But my stout little Dicky would keep firm in his saddle, an' at every shot that came from the leg he'd shout like a fellow in a scrimmage at a fair. An' Teague would bark, bark, until you'd think he'd lose his wits.

"Tis often and often I clapped my hands and laughed my 'nough at their sport. An' while the boy shouted, an' Teague barked, barked, barked,—you'd see the Curnel slapping the child on the back an' shaking hands with Teague, in as high glee as either the boy or the dog, only he'd have the cross-grained face all the time."

"What you have just described to me, Mary, refers to the time when Richard O'Meara and the Colonel were on friendly terms?"

"Oh, yes ;—yes, indeed."

“The intimacy at the cottage did not, I suppose, continue after the quarrel on the bridge?”

“No, it did not. Michael, you know, had to beg of the Curnel not to come there. But for all that, often an’ often, we’d hear a whistle that would pierce your ears. An’ whenever the whistle was heard, nothing could keep Teague or Dicky at home, an’ to a certainty they’d meet the Curnel down by the water-side.” There’s a brook running into the river not far off, an’ ’tis through a glen the brook runs. An’ in the glen Teague an’ Dicky would find the Curnel, an’ there they’d have their sports together. But the poor Curnel never came to the cottage again after the whacking on the bridge.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

RICHARD O'MEARA'S PLEASANT, HEARTY LETTER TO
HIS ELLEN.

I HAVE not, as I before intimated, followed the infatuated Richard O'Meara during his reckless career of intemperance. I will allow three years to pass over before I again take up the course of my narrative.

During that period Richard O'Meara had continued, with scarcely an interruption, to drink, drink constantly, until he had reached the final stage of his calamity—until he had reached that stage at which drunkards invariably arrive. He had reached that condition of physical and mental debility when even for the shortest space of time, existence is

unendurable, unless the excitement produced by intoxicating liquor imparts an insane vivacity to the eye, a thriftless volubility to the tongue, a temporary tension and energy to the quivering nerves and muscles. The opium-eater must have his drug, and the tippler must have his drink, or the opium-eater and the tippler will both cringe from themselves and collapse into inanity. To this factitious state of being the continued use of inebriating liquor surely leads.

I shall not pause to analyze the physical causes producing this result, although direct physical causes could be assigned for it. If this final condition of the drunkard creates aversion, and merits condemnation, it is calculated at the same time to arouse our pity and commiseration.

Professional business, Richard O'Meara averred, required his presence in Dublin. This was a falsehood. For some time he had had no professional engagements whatever; no one had sought his professional services. Not one of his own family; not one of the inquisitors of "The Town of the Cas-

cados" believed him when he asserted that the success of an important law-suit depended on his personal supervision. There was a time when Richard O'Meara would not have spoken falsely. Alas! the slave to intemperance loses caste, morally, socially, physically.

To Dublin Richard O'Meara journeyed, however, professedly to attend the courts. He was absent beyond a month. During that time he had written home but once; the third day after his departure the letter was received. It was placed in my hands by Michael Hanrahan, and I copy it here. It was apparently written while the pen was held in the fingers of one under the influence of the illusive and temporary glare which habitual tipplers mistake for sunshine. There was something like a momentary glimpse of right feeling, but miserably erratic. Evidently it was not written to give pain. Yet the already cicatrized heart of the reader received from it another gash; its perusal gave an addition to the heavy load of grief that already weighed her down.

Dublin, October 12th, 18—.

“MY VERY DEAREST ELLEN,

“Here I am, safe and sound, without a scratch or a scrape, sound wind and limb, and hearty as a buck, although I can’t jump so high.

“My spirits were down below zero when I left home—all affectionate husbands like myself are so, or ought to be so, when by important business they are obliged to leave the charge of the nest entirely to their mate. There was about me a crankiness foreign to my nature, a peevishness that irritated me against myself, and put me in a humour to quarrel with every one or any one, if I could only get the colour of a pretext. I actually felt an itching to quarrel with myself first, and then to pummel all within reach of my arm, right and left, old and young, male and female, without regard to sex or age. By the highest of luck, however, I found myself in company with three of the best-natured fellows I ever met.

“We helped ourselves to a ‘drop of the creature’ wherever a drop was to be got. And fun and frolic,

wit and waggery, jest and jocularity, lush and laughter (this alliteration is spontaneous, be sure of it), was the rule of the road all along to the end of the journey—”

When Ellen O'Meara had read thus far, she covered her pale, cold face with the letter. For a long, long time, no smile had lighted her husband's face for her. His manner had been, to speak moderately, cold and unkind. For the most part he had behaved, whenever at home, harshly, often violently. And Ellen, while her heart pined for his company, had feared to meet him,—had tremblingly sought to avoid him.

Alas! alas! She had learned to understand but too distinctly how it was that when away from her he could be the leader of mirth, and the loudest laughers. She understood but too well that to him she was no pleasant, boozing companion, but a neglected wife.

Ellen O'Meara inquired of her heart, while she held the letter against her face, was it not cruel of

her Richard thus to describe to her his immoderate enjoyment with chance companions, while to her he was so cold and repulsive? Keen was the pang of that heart in reply to her query; and painful was its throb as she admitted to herself that the levity of the writer was produced by his besetting sin. She was obliged again and again to wipe her eyes before she could read on. I resume the letter.

“Ellen, now mind me, you little pussy, don’t be jealous of what I have to tell you. For a good distance of my way I was next neighbour to one of the finest, dashingest, merriest girls in the world. Not to be compared with you, however, my old woman, when you were in your prime. No—I will say that for you.

“As a matter of course, you know, I was a most impressible, most bewitched bachelor, at her service. Not the slightest suspicion on her part that I had left a wife and three children at home to lay claim to me—”

Ellen O’Meara uttered a cry of agony. The

tears gushed plentifully from her eyes, and pattered on the paper.

“Oh, oh!” she sobbed out, “we have *not* three children. Oh! heartless father, two of our darlings are with their God. Oh! Richard, you their father, do you forget that we have lost them? or has their loss so little affected you that you make a jest of it to their mother? And, Richard, Richard,—you—”

She curbed herself, and she shuddered from head to foot as she did so, and her face assumed an expression of painful terror. The love she bore her husband had been so deeply impressed on her plastic nature that nothing short of death could efface it. The accusation her wounded mind had partly shaped was incompatible with the love she clung to, and shudderingly she cast it from her. No—her Richard had *not* been the cause of her children’s death. It had been—the will of God!

“Oh, dearest Richard,” she moaned, “why will you try me so? Why, why, will you tax my love so exigently?”

The letter went on thus :—

“I have in the inside of my pocket-book, together with one of her ‘follow me quick’ ringlets, the address of this charming creature. She has a fine dower in lands and ready cash, and by the soul in my body, if ’twere allowable under the Christian dispensation, I would prosecute my suit. Unhappily, polygamy is an indictable offence. In this land of so-called liberty, our freedom of action is no freedom at all, and I needs must bound my views to one wife—and one only. I positively think of giving up my faith in the gospel, and swearing by the ‘Turkish Koran.

“But until I do, I subscribe myself, my dearest Ellen,

“Your ‘Paddy Cary’ of a husband,

“RICHARD O’MEARA.”

The whole of the day on which this playful letter was received, Ellen O’Meara held it bitterly in her hand, and wept over it. And days and days were so spent by her.

It was, as I have said, the only letter she received

during her husband's absence. It was dated from Dublin only, so Ellen could not reply to it. But in truth she felt no disposition to write. How could she have shaped a reply to that cruel letter? Even in the need for counsel and protection that shortly came upon her, she knew not where to find her husband.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT MICHAEL HANRAHAN'S GAY MASK COVERED.

NEARLY six weeks passed before Richard O'Meara made his appearance again in his cottage.

During this time, the uneasiness of Michael Hanrahan's mind was tantalizing to him. The melancholy conviction forced itself on him that suspense and sorrow were rapidly working with fatal effect on "his angel," as he continued to name her. So that on her account and on his own he was urged to visit the town twice or thrice daily to question carriers of goods, drivers of public vehicles, and any travellers he could light on.

But from none could he obtain intelligence of his foster-brother. Mary and he had, as usual, consulted together on the necessity for these visita

Mary never on any occasion differed from Michael, and she was convinced that the inquiries should be prosecuted diligently.

The work of necessity was to be carried on cautiously, however. If Michael were to make manifest the great anxiety that preyed on him, ill-natured and injurious conclusions would be arrived at by the eager gossipers of the town. After mature deliberation, a plan was devised between "the pair of Solomons," calculated to blink the widow-woman and all such news-carriers.

Michael shrewdly judged that there was an espionage at the post-office to detect the arrival of letters. And he was not mistaken in his conjecture. For really, the mysterious absence of Richard O'Meara was to be accounted for to the satisfaction of the town, *coûte que coûte*. It was known that one letter only had passed through "the post," and Michael would cunningly give it to be understood that every day, and often twice in the day, letters had been received; but that for substantial reasons of his own "Masther Dick" had sent them by hand.

The constant inquiries of Michael were to be for letters, and while on the perquisition for them he could put other questions, carelessly to all appearance, but most astutely directed, for all that.

To carry out the "plan" in the most effectual manner, Michael was to assume a gay-fellow demeanour, "not to seem down in the mouth at all;" and he was to make believe as if nothing in the world troubled him. If any inquisitive people, Toby Purcell for instance, were to put plump questions to him about home, Michael was to aver that the angel was in blooming health, and as gay as a linnet of a summer's morning. But for fear her poor white face might be noticed, even through the thick folds of her veil, when she was able to creep to the chapel, he might give a hint that she was likely to be laid up soon in a certain way. But he must not go far on that head.

Poor Michael! many a bitter struggle it cost him to mould his flexible features into an assumption of gaiety, while sadness gnawed his heart. And after all, it was duplicity to no purpose. Mary told me

how Michael and herself subsequently discovered that no one was deceived, and that notwithstanding all his cleverness, Michael was laughed at, almost to his face, by "Toby Purcell an' the rest of them ;" ay, even when he thought he had been most successful.

There was one person, however, to meet whom Michael had no necessity to wear his mask. And surely was it beyond measure a relief to Michael to escape, as he expressed it, "from calling it a summer's day when the black frost of grief was in the very marrow of his bones." And it was with one of those long-drawn sighs that escape us when we are relieved from great pain, that Michael would turn to the bridge after having made his fruitless inquiries, to look out for the Half-pay.

It is a sheerly selfish instinct that impels us to seek a confidant in our troubles. We are urged by an innate conviction that we will lighten the load we carry, for a time, at least, when we can find one for whose inspection we can unpack our burthen.

When, shoulder to shoulder, the Half-pay and Michael leaned over the bridge together, and that

Michael had, as it were, flung his town-mask into the river below, it was like a generous balsam to his feelings to reveal the real state of affairs at the cottage to one who loved and pitied the angel, as sincerely and as heartily as himself. And to one, moreover, who did not controvert Michael's doctrine that his foster-brother was one of the most lovable of men "only for the cursed dbrink;" in fact that the drink was entirely to blame for existing evils, and not the drinker,—Richard O'Meara, owing to its vile power, not being an accountable person.

It was during one of these unburthening, confidential interviews between Michael and the Half-pay, that Michael related, in a low, sad voice, which often failed him as he went on, that the bloom of the rose was gone entirely entirely from the angel's cheeks, and that she had the look of a living corpse. Her lips even, that had been of such a "shiney" red, appearing like wetted paper, they were so white and moist. And Michael informed his sympathizing listener that the angel was wasted away to a skeleton, and that she coughed "a churchyard

cough." That some days she was unable to rise from her bed, and that a walk from one room to another, even with Mary's tender help, was a wearisome journey to her.

Was it not, think you, an emancipation that Michael Hanrahan longed for, to doff his fool's cap with its jangling bells, to rub away the paint, to discard the grimace, and shoulder to shoulder with his eccentric friend, whisper the sad reality into the ear of so sincere a sharer of his sorrow? And were not the abrupt, but to Michael expressive, ejaculations of the Half-pay consoling to him?

Yes, indeed. This fellowship was eagerly sought for by Michael, and ardently offered by the Half-pay.

Day after day passed, and Michael Hanrahan had still no more cheering report to make. The angel spent her days and her nights listening for the sound of her husband's voice, and then crying over the hope deferred. And instead of her husband's voice, the bold tones of Nora Spruhan's, in loud contention with Michael, often met her ear, and terrified and shocked her.

The Half-pay, by two short words, "Thrash—her!" and by an explanatory action with his cudgel, proposed a remedy for this latter grievance, and was even starting off to carry his threat into effect. But Michael, foreseeing the consequences, dissuaded him from trying the unpromising experiment.

A few days further on, and Michael had even more painful intelligence to communicate.

There was no money in the cottage, there was no food beyond a scanty stock of potatoes, the vegetables of the garden, and the milk of the cows. These were good enough for Mary and himself, and they gave God thanks for them and used them. But there was Nora Spruhan—she clamoured against such diet, and filled the house with her brawling. And there was the angel. The angel must perish without a little wine, and something tempting in the way of solid food. It was little, very little sufficed for her, but it should be good and nourishing. After casting his eyes cautiously round to ascertain that no strangers witnessed his proceeding, Michael exhibited to the Half-pay some articles of plate he had

brought with him to dispose of. But Michael was sadly perplexed where to find a market. Michael did not at all regard what people might say of himself. It would chime in with his views even if they should judge harshly of him, and say that he was plundering his foster-brother in his absence. If people would only think in this way, Michael wouldn't mind. The Lord would see him and understand him, and he was satisfied. But then, if he offered the articles for sale here and there, an exposure of the destitution and misery at the cottage might follow. The predicament was a stumbling-block to Michael.

To be sure he could go to the county town, and in this way avoid exposure. But what was to happen while he was away? Who could answer for the dreaded Nora Spruhan?

“Stop—here!”

And the Half-pay stumped off in the direction of his little house above the river with the alertness—if not the grace—of a boy. In a very short time Michael saw him descend, as briskly as the

nature of the ground would permit, and they were again leaning over the bridge, shoulder to shoulder.

The Half-pay seized Michael's hand, by no means gently. He placed a soft substance within that hand, and squeezed the fingers so tightly against the palm that Michael involuntarily winced from the force of the pressure. When the gripe was relaxed, Michael Hanrahan opened his fingers and examined his palm. There was more than one bank-note there. He looked at his friend with tears of gratitude overflowing his eyes.

"May the Lord give you his grace and blessing!" was ejaculated in a broken voice. And the Half-pay returned Michael's look so fixedly and sternly that a passing observer might have imagined he glanced defiance and resentment from beneath his knotted brows.

A few days farther on, and Michael Hanrahan had no need to appear in the "Town of the Cascades" with his mask of levity on. Further ill-acted disguise was unnecessary. It could not be kept secret that the sheriff of the county had, in

technical parlance, "laid an execution" there, and that his officers were in charge. It could not be concealed from the widow-woman, or from "Toby Purcell and the rest of them," that an auction of all that was saleable, including the cow that gave the milk, and the small stock of potatoes, was to take place in a few days.

Most abjectly, but vainly, did Michael Hanrahan entreat of the bailiff employed taking an inventory of the effects, not to force his way into the bed-room of his sick angel. By a bribe, part of the Half-pay's gift, a compromise was effected, and a delay granted. And the panting, shivering Ellen sat as a looker-on while the bailiff, aided by his companion who held the "ink-horn," added to his inventory the furniture of the apartment, even to the bed from which she had just risen.

The legal time for "the sheriff's sale" came on, and for the greater part of two days the Cottage of the Cascades was in possession of a crowd, every one that wished entering without a question, and hurrying from room to room. The house was in an

uproar ; there was rushing and tramping ; there were jests and laughter ; there was the loud din of many voices. And at length everything was bought up and taken away, and the pleasant Cottage of the Cascades was bare and silent,—bare and silent, with one exception.

The bed-room of the angel, and the sitting-room adjoining, had not not been despoiled. The Half-pay had outbid all competitors for the furniture of these two rooms, so they remained intact.

To a certain extent the privacy of the suffering “angel” had been preserved through all the clamour of the sheriff’s sale. The Half-pay and Michael Hanrahan had stood as sentinels at her door.

The Half-pay’s look of prohibition, and Michael Hanrahan’s pleading words prevented intrusion to a great degree. So that Ellen was but little gazed at as she sat within her chamber listening to the turmoil without, with what fortitude she could command.

And yet, while poverty and wreck came on the once pleasant home, there were no tidings of the absent Richard O’Meara.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RICHARD O'MEARA'S RETURN.

WHEN a week had passed over, and that Michael Hanrahan, notwithstanding his unrivalled tact and diligence, had failed to gain intelligence of his truant foster-brother, he made it a point not to permit an evening to go by without joining the assemblage of beggars and livers on chance at the widow-woman's door, where the public car, conveying passengers in the direction to and from the metropolis, drew up.

For many weary evenings did he return thence to the cottage with trailing step, drooping and down-cast. At length, on the tenth evening subsequent to the sheriff's sale, the watchful Michael recognized

the voice of the person he looked for, even while the car was driving down the main street towards his stand.

He recognized the voice before he could visibly distinguish his foster-brother, for it was loud and mirthful. Humour and frolic were going on amongst the passengers, and the voice and laugh of Richard O'Meara were recognizable by Michael above those of the other participators in the glee.

Michael Hanrahan's assumption of gaiety had been cast aside since the distress at the cottage had been made public, and as he leaned against the jamb of the widow-woman's door, any one could tell that he was woe-begone and desponding.

When the car pulled up, and that he saw Richard O'Meara spring down buoyantly, and accost his fellow-passengers and the lookers-on with exuberant jollity of manner, the "welcome home," stuck in his throat, and he could not give it utterance.

Michael did not fail to remark the effect produced on the observers by Richard O'Meara's conduct.

The beggars, clamorous towards others, did not accost him : none of their voluble prayers, so profusely showered on every one else, were uttered for him : they whispered together, and, as Michael feared, they muttered curses against him. Not one of the eager candidates for chance-employment offered service to him. If a neighbour passed, the boisterously-jovial Richard O'Meara was regarded with aversion, and was avoided. All this Michael saw and felt as keenly as if he were himself the one publicly condemned as the exhibitor of unnatural levity, while poverty and approaching death were in his ruined home.

The mastiff, Teague, had accompanied Michael on his look-out. He had started off to meet the car, and came gambolling by its side as it approached. His whine of recognition and welcome was acknowledged by his master, and his demonstrations of affection were cordially returned. Michael, too, was recognized, and his foster-brother shook him gaily by both hands.

"Michael, my boy," Richard O'Meara cried out

aloud ; “ ha !—you’re here, by Jove ! to meet me. Rejoiced I am to find you so hale and stout ; a sample of good living, and of pleasant days, and sound sleep of nights.”

The speaker stooped and whispered in Michael’s ear.

“ Hie you home, Michael,” he said, “ and tell the mistress I shall be with her shortly. And, Michael, my worthy, mind that you have a savoury, delicious supper for us. We shall celebrate my return happily and lovingly, your mistress and I—that we will, by Jove ! Hie you off now, Michael, and announce my arrival, in prime order, as you see.”

Richard O’Meara did not keep his engagement with Michael. He did not spend the evening with his wife. During many hours of darkness she had watched for him, and he came not. At length his footsteps resounding along the garden walk were heard through the stillness of the night. He was admitted by Michael. Even then his wife hoped he would seek her, but he did not. Without speaking, he entered the room nearest at hand. There he

sank on the floor, and was very soon in a profound but uneasy slumber.

And his Ellen ?

She stole into the denuded room where her husband lay. She sat down on the floor close to him, she placed his head upon her lap, and there cradled it. She passed her thin white hand across his forehead and through his hair ; with the touch of her chilly fingers she cooled his heated brow. And so she sat during the continuance of darkness, propped up after a while by the arms of Mary, who had come in search of her. And Ellen O'Meara sat there when the November morning looked in upon her coldly and uncheerfully.

About two hours after the leaden dawn stole in, Richard O'Meara awoke from his feverish sleep. He looked upwards. His wife's gentle, unrepublishing eyes met his. After a momentary pause he sprang to his feet ; he gazed confusedly at the watcher of the night, as with hands pressed together she sat looking upwards into his face. There was terror and bewilderment in his rolling eyes and quivering

features and heaving chest. He clasped his head between both his hands with a strong pressure, and looked round, and round, and downward.

"Ellen, Ellen," he at length gasped out, "where am I? What do you do sitting there so wan and ghost-like? Injured, wronged, and ill-requited Ellen, rise up from that lowly position. Rise from that prostration, Ellen! Save me from interminable despair by bringing back the colour to your sunken cheeks; and let the glowing blood glisten through the film of your lips again; and oh! let not the sweet blue of your eyes retreat from me so."

Deeply agitated, he knelt, and cast his arms around her, and raised her up, and held her in his embrace.

"I have been ill—very ill, Richard, during your absence," she gently said.

"That is but too visible to me, Ellen. Ha! you are dying—dying in my very arms! There is no pulsation in her heart, and her eyes are closed,—and her limbs that were so elastic trail helplessly—"

As he spoke what his distracted mind suggested, his gaze wandered round and round the apartment.

"How—how is this?" he cried. "Surely this is our drawing-room. Where is the furniture? Where is the sofa on which I might lay my Ellen?"

"In the parlour, Richard," Ellen faintly answered. "In the parlour I can lie down."

"Oh, oh!" he groaned, "I had forgotten—now it recurs to me—that some one—somewhere—told me of this. I forget where I was told it, or who told it—I spurned him from me; I now see it was no falsehood to tell me that my home was stripped to the bare walls, and that my wife's tender limbs had no softer resting-place than the naked boards."

"Help me to the parlour, dear Richard," petitioned the exhausted Ellen.

He raised her in his strong arms, and bore her into the parlour. He laid her gently on the sofa, and settled the cushions under her head. There

was wine on the sideboard ; he poured some into a glass, and held it to her lips. She swallowed it eagerly, and before long gained strength to raise herself to a sitting posture.

Richard O'Meara, his hands pressed forcibly against his temples, walked round, and round, and round the room. For some minutes the rapid circuit was continued. He paused, drew a chair slowly towards him, seated himself opposite his wife, and addressed her.

"Ellen,—my guilt might not be so appallingly hideous to me had I met you in robust health, angrily casting your reproaches on me, and accusing me of the wrongs I have heaped on you. But oh!—to find you passing away so lamb-like to your death, without one word of reproach from your lips, convicts me to myself of being the most detestable scoundrel that exists,—even I who sit here gazing on the ruin of your beauty."

"Dear Richard, let us look forward with hope in the goodness of God. You will leave me no more,

and we shall yet be happy together—ay, even as happy as we used to be.”

“More abundant blessings could not be granted mortal than were bestowed on me,” Richard O’Meara said, following up the train of thought presented to his distracted brain while he had hurried round the room—“I possessed superabundant health, and I had the energy that health bestows. I had the power, and the capacity, and the opportunity, to win my way honourably to wealth and distinction. The Creator of the good and beautiful granted to me the love of one of the most perfect of his creatures. This sweet being, with open hand and open heart, trustingly blessed me with herself—gave to my keeping her wealth. I have cast all these favours from me. I have flung away health, energy, industry, character! In return for my wife’s innocent love and uncalculating trust, I have dragged her down with me to unmitigated destitution and pauperism, and have hurried her from the heyday of her young life to an untimely grave!”

“Richard, my own dear Richard, be moderate in your self-accusation. I shall recover, with heaven’s help—”

“To beggary and want !”

“Surely, dearest husband, we shall not be destitute? There will be sufficient in what remains to us. There is the settlement you insisted on making at our marriage. That is not trifling, and with peace and love, we shall be rich enough.”

“Destitute—utterly, totally destitute, Ellen,—you have yet to learn the full extent of your destroyer’s villainy. Your settlement is gone—gone—squandered at the gaming-table. From the bottom of my foul heart do I hope you will take the only step that can recover your property.”

“For your sake, and for our child’s, dearest Richard, I will do whatever you advise.”

“Then listen to me, Ellen. You must prosecute your dastardly betrayer for forgery. I forged your signature to the deed of conveyance. I am a felon. Convict me of the offence—it will be a mercy to me. Convicted of felony at the bar of justice, as I

shall be, the deed of sale will be void. It will be a mercy to me."

Ellen covered her eyes, shuddered, and fell back insensible.

"Oh, God!" shouted Richard O'Meara, standing over her; "oh God of retributive justice, what punishment do I not deserve at your hands? God of justice, God of retribution, pour the full venom of your wrath upon my guilty head! Thy vengeance is my due."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE WIFE'S GRAVE.

It was late in November when Richard O'Meara returned from his calamitous visit to Dublin.

It was now the eve of the Christmas-day following.

In the Cottage of the Cascades no Christmas banquet was in preparation: no Christmas revelry was to go forward. Silent death, not laughing revelry, was the household ruler at the cottage. The eve of the Christmas-day succeeding the interview between her and her husband, as related in the last Chapter, Ellen O'Meara's funeral was to take place.

The month of December had rushed forward hand-in-hand with scowling, furious winter. All through, the weather had been severe even for the

season, and Ellen's death had been accelerated by the rude contact. For some days and nights a biting frost had cleared the air, and the sun had shown through a chill, cloudless atmosphere, brightly and brilliantly, while at night, the most distant stars were visible, and sparkled cheerily. On the eve of the Christmas-day the blue of the sky was hidden by a dull, uniform leaden veil, and at the hour of three in the afternoon, when the coffin enclosing the remains of Ellen O'Meara was borne out of the cottage for burial, there was no view of the firmament, the snow fell so thickly.

In Ireland, funerals are not "performed,"—the term, I believe, used elsewhere. The expression of respect towards the deceased is not so much denoted by the display of the paraphernalia of mourning, as by the number of persons congregated to follow the remains.

Notwithstanding the severity of the weather, scarcely one of the inhabitants of our "Town of the Cascades" was absent from Ellen O'Meara's burial. The assemblage was increased by the

attendance of the people from the surrounding country, so that when, according to custom, the coffin was placed on chairs outside the house of mourning, while prayers were offered for a happy eternity to the departed soul, the snow fell upon the uncovered heads of a dense crowd.

The body was not placed in a hearse, decorated with nodding plumes. Such a conveyance was not in the town. It was borne to the grave on the shoulders of those who volunteered their services. It is a notable proof of public estimation when the bearers of a coffin are frequently changed. It often occurs that the same supporters will walk but a pace or two under their burthen, when they are replaced by others.

This evidence of respect and esteem was eagerly displayed at Ellen O'Meara's funeral. And so constant had been the pauses, while the removal from shoulder to shoulder was being effected, that the progress made was very slow. By the time the procession had clambered to the hill-top churchyard described at the opening of this narrative, the short,

gloomy day was closing in, and the feathery insignia of winter's reign was coming down thicker and thicker, as if in representation of a chilly winding-sheet.

Richard O'Meara walked close behind his wife's coffin, and his boy walked beside him. Mere children are but momentarily affected by the sight of death. For the most part the novelty of the attendant circumstances impresses them more forcibly than the incident itself. Richard O'Meara's son was now, however, in his thirteenth year. He felt the nature of his bereavement with all a boy's fresh ardour, and he wept and sobbed aloud without curb or disguise.

Richard O'Meara's head drooped forward, as lowly as it could fall; it was supported by his chin resting against his chest. He glanced not to the right or left; he sought no sympathy; he looked into no eye to ask commiseration; he claimed no word of solace.

Had Richard O'Meara craved compassion throughout the crowd of which he was the centre, none

would have been accorded him. It was the general credence that the premature death of his wife was the direct result of personal violence. And it was whispered from one to the other, that it would have been more seemly had he been absent on the present occasion, than to walk with the tottering gait of inebriation, behind her corpse. Richard O'Meara, had he sought commiseration, would have met reproach and blame.

"There wasn't a Christian crature there, young or old, gentle or simple, that had a feeling for him—not one!" were Michael Hanrahan's words. "The poor, heart-sore fellow. Heaven above knows, an', mind you, I'm right certain my words are truth,—he'd stretch himself in the one grave with the angel at the same moment, if he could;—an' he'd cry out to them to shovel the churchyard clay fast over him, to hide him from all eyes but the One—the eye that nothing can be hidden from. Ay, indeed, he would."

Michael looked upward, and crossed his forehead.

"Ah!" he sighed, "the neighbours were too sorely heavy on him. Maybe, if the honest truth was told, there was many a one among them that lived in glass houses themselves. Many a one of them, maybe, oughtn't to throw stones at their neighbours. 'Tisn't the best Christian that finds out the faults of others the soonest.

"Ah!" sighed Michael again, "the Lord be good to us all."

After a thoughtful pause, he continued:

"Myself and the good, honest dog, Teague, walked at the funeral, just behind of the foster-brother an' young Dicky. I could hear, as plain as you hear me now, what was said among the people. An' if *he* wasn't as deaf as a milestone, he heard what was said too. But he didn't heed it. They couldn't say worse of him than he thought about himself, poor fellow."

At the entrance to the elevated cemetery wherein the grave had been already prepared, the body, in conformity with the universal custom amongst Catholics in Ireland, was lowered from the shoul-

ders of the men who had borne it so far. Six fresh volunteer assistants stepped out eagerly from the crowd. They clasped their hands together in pairs, and on the arms thus linked, the coffin was deposited. The attendant clergyman, his hat raised, but held so as to protect his head in some degree from the snow, then walked slowly forward, reciting the burial service. With bared heads the funeral attendants followed, joining in the responses. In this order the remains were carried round the graveyard before being deposited on the edge of the excavation in which they were to be laid.

It may seem to my Irish readers that the notice of this ceremony, never dispensed with, is an intrusion here. A circumstance occurred, however, while the procession moved round the churchyard, which cannot be passed over, and which renders the allusion incidental.

As Richard O'Meara, with bare head exposed to the fast descending snow-flakes, walked close at the coffin-foot, he stumbled, and fell heavily. As he went down, his temple struck against a

lowly head-stone; a deep gash was inflicted, and the blood gushed over his face and down his person.

Michael Hanrahan, the prostrate man's son, and the dog Teague, alone hurried to raise him up. He was momentarily stunned, and did not at once recover. Michael and the lad had not bodily strength to effect their purpose, and Michael piteously appealed for aid. Not one of the lookers-on offered a helping hand. The clergyman alone, when he understood the cause of interruption, hastened back and gave his assistance. The bleeding man quickly regained his strength, and the circuit of the church-yard was completed.

The coffin was placed in the grave; the stones and clay fell with a hollow sound upon it, and the little elevation marking the place of rest was shaped and sodded by the willing hands of the neighbours. There is a peculiar taste, if the term may be used, exemplified in the fashioning and trimming of a grave-mound, for which some humble funereal attendants possess a recognized talent. This

taste was cheerfully exercised in moulding Ellen O'Meara's grave-mound.

While the coffin was descending into its repository,—while the stones and clay were thrown on it, and while the grave-mound was moulding and sodding,—Richard O'Meara, still bare-headed, leaned upon a head-stone that overlooked the spot. On the coffin-lid spots of blood fell from his temple: the workers below did not wipe them away. They left them red as they fell. The dripping blood mingled with the covering of clay and stones, and rained on the sodded elevation when it was shaped and trimmed.

The thick darkness of the winter-night had not as yet shrouded the hill-top churchyard, when the grave was perfected to the satisfaction of the neighbours, who had wrought at it with such kind will: but the murky screen was closing rapidly. The large funereal assemblage had nearly dispersed; a few only, in addition to those engaged as workers, had remained: these had tarried to the last, chari-

tably intent on discharging what they considered a last duty to the dead.

The shovel and spade used in the work of burial were laid, in representation of a cross, on "the narrow house" just sealed up. The neighbours stood around in a circle, and uncovered their heads. Michael Hanrahan, as was known to those present, had been piously brought up; and he was tacitly acknowledged as the leader of the religious rite they were to join in.

The psalm "De Profundis" was recited, the verses repeated alternately by the leader and his respondents. The ceremony closed with a prayer for eternal happiness to the soul of the deceased. When this prayer had been prayed, shovel and pick and spade were shouldered, and "the pious neighbours," and the sealers-up of "the narrow house" descended with all necessary caution from the rocky hill-top churchyard to the town below.

But the hill-top churchyard was not left in the sole possession of the dead.

When the circle of "pious neighbours" had been formed for prayer, Richard O'Meara sank cautiously to his knees at the grave's foot. His voice was not heard, however, joining with the others.

"Maybe the poor fellow said to himself, 'I'm not worthy to offer up a prayer,'"—was Michael Hanrahan's interpretation of his silence.

When, after the concluding ritual, all the others had gone away, Michael Hanrahan, Richard O'Meara, Richard O'Meara's son, the dog Teague, and one other person remained.

Nearly an hour elapsed, and Richard O'Meara continued still kneeling at the grave's foot. The almost impenetrable darkness of night came on; and as it fell, the weather changed. It ceased to snow; the wind rose high, and heavy, drenching rain poured down. Yet Richard O'Meara, uncovered and bleeding, his head drooped upon his chest, as it had drooped at the funeral, knelt on the spot where he had first bent his knees.

"For the Lord's sake, come with us out of this!" Michael Hanrahan besought.

"Quit me, fiend of perdition! Be gone!"

Richard O'Meara shouted out this answer to Michael's solicitation so fiercely and so shrilly, that Michael recoiled from him. The still kneeling man raised his right arm very slowly, as if he were forcing it upwards. He laid the tips of his fingers against his forehead.

"In the name of the Father!"—he said, in a deep inward voice. He paused, and his arm fell as if paralyzed.

"He began the blessing of himself," observed Michael, addressing me with solemn earnestness of manner. "He began the blessing of himself;—he never finished it!"

"From that moment to the present time that's in it, it was my thought, and it is my thought still, that if he had finished the blessing of himself,—'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Amen!'"—Michael suited the action to the word, crossing himself as Catholics do,—"the evil fate that was before him that night would not have come upon him. When he said, 'In the name of

the Father,' he stopped, and he didn't say the other holy words! And then he gave a pitiful cry, an' he threw himself down the full length of his body along the new-made grave."

Michael Hanrahan was placed in a most difficult, —I would say, an alarming position. What was he to do with himself on such a dreary night, and in such a place? How was he to dispose of the drenched and shivering boy at his side? How was he to act towards the prostrate man who lay on his face along the grave?

Michael's own words will best describe the events that subsequently took place.

"Never before, and never since," he said, "was I out of such a night as that was. It was so out-and-out pitch dark, that when I stretched my hand from me to grope my way, the very hand belonging to my own body I couldn't see! The wind blew, up there on the top of the hill, so wicked that it put me on my best to keep my feet: Believe you me, that if you were blown down there, you'd be bruised to mummy among the tombstones and the head-

stones you couldn't see. Or maybe you'd be whipped, body and bones, down the hill that was of a sugarloaf shape at the side above the river. You know the churchyard yourself?"

"Yes, Michael; it was there I met your Mary; and in consequence of my visit on that occasion, you and she have from time to time made me acquainted with the story of Ellen O'Meara's grave."

"Just so,—sure enough," resumed Michael. "*I* never had the bad fortune, Lord be praised! to come across anything in the night-time worse than a Christian. But other people hadn't my luck. Often it came to pass that benighted men,—ay, and women as well as men,—met with the troubled spirits of the departed, in lonesome places, and in churchyards, and where blood was shed. If the sthrongest man that ever tossed a sledge, and the stoutest as well as the sthrongest, was to look on a troubled spirit, the sthrength or the courage wouldn't stay with him, and he'd faint dead, like a girl, the very moment he crossed a threshold and came among the living again."

“So I have heard, Michael.”

“You may believe it for the truth. If you were in the churchyard where our angel—God rest her!—was buried; if you were there the night of her funeral, the darkness so heavy that you couldn’t see an inch before you, and the rain an’ the hail coming down as if the world was to be drowned a second time, and the roaring wind tearing here and there and everywhere,—my word for it but your heart would fail you.”

“Certainly it was a dreary spot of such a night.”

“Dreary, as you say, it was.” And Michael cringed, and drew in his breath shudderingly at the recollection.

“If you were there as I was, you couldn’t tell no more than myself if the moaning, an’ the wailing, and the shouting that was among the tombs an’ headstones, an’ in the old church that stood among the graves, and down through the grove on the hill-side, came from the wind or from the throubled spirits of the dead people. Oh! that I may never be in such a place again of such a night as that,

until the time comes when my eyes an' ears will be closed for ever, without the sight or hearing in them.

"As sure as I'm speaking to you, my teeth struck together so loud that myself was frightened at the noise they made, though I did my endeavours to keep them from making such a churchyard clatther.

"And there was my poor young Dicky. He crushed himself up against me as close as he could, an' I put my arms round his neck to make him understand he was not there alone. I could feel the shiver that was on him ; I could feel every shake of his body ; and sure it was no surprise that he should shiver and shake. He was soaked through to the skin as well as myself. If the terror was on me, that might be his father, it was no wondher the poor boy should shiver, from the wet, and cold, and fright."

"I am not surprised at it, Michael."

"It was a hard thrial to both of us to stop up there. Trying to think, the best I could, I remem-

bered there was a friend not far away, and that friend was our good-hearted poor Curnel. Before the blinking light of the black evening went from us entirely, I saw the Curnel hobbling into the old church, an' I bethought me that he was there still. If ever one crature loved another, the Curnel loved our Dicky, and I thought within myself that I'd bring the perishing boy to the Curnel, an' who knows but he might coax him away out of the sleet an' darkness, an' the unnatural noises of the place. 'Hold me fast by the hand, Dicky,' I whispered to the child, as well as I could bring out the words. 'Hold me fast by the hand, an' come with me.'— 'No, Michael,' he made answer, and I was obliged to bend down my ear to him to hear his words; 'you may go, Michael, if you are afraid to stay. You can go somewhere where there is light and people,' says he; 'go if you are afraid to stay. I will stop here to be company for my father and to take care of him. I'll stop here to help him up when he's done crying on my mother's grave.' Wasn't Dicky a brave, courageous boy, Sir?"

"A noble boy he was, Michael."

"I knew Dicky—no wondher that I should—I knew him to be headsthrong, and I knew that young as he was, the thing he'd say he'd do. He was a brave and a bould fellow for his years, an' I knew well, that if I couldn't dhrag him by main force over the graves an' the head-stones, he wouldn't leave the father there alone. I was sore afflicted, and like one losing his senses.

"'I'll go, in the Lord's name,' says I in my mind, 'an' I'll talk to the Curnel. If he *can* help us in our need, he *will* help us. If I can find my way to him, I'll bring him over near to us. He'll be company for us, an' this poor shaking boy and myself won't be all out so lonely an' so frightened when the Curnel is standing by. So, in heaven's name,'—and I made the sign of the cross on my forehead, as a bar betwixt me and the evil of the place,—'I'll try if I can feel my road through the pitch-dark.'

"I put out the two hands, as far as they could sthretch from me, an' I groped before me, an' to both

sides of me, and I felt my way with one foot. And then I felt my way with the other foot, an' made a little step, and then I made another little step, and then another. There was a tall, black head-stone just before me: I could see it, for it was blacker than the night, black as that was. I laid my right hand this way on the black head-stone. I felt it moving undher the hand I laid on it."

"Michael, you were under the influence of great terror, and your shrinking imagination deceived you!"

"There was fear on me, no doubt, I won't deny it. You wouldn't get many to be free and easy and careless if they were in my place. But I tell you, as sure as that the same right hand is on your shouldher this present moment, so sure did the black head-stone move. And furthermore, as certain as that you see my mouth opening and shutting, and as certain as that you hear the words coming from my lips, the wrist of my right hand was grasped fast—fast as if there was an iron chain round it, and then the hand an' arm was dhragged from me the same

as if a sthrong man was pulling at the chain with all his might."

"Michael?—Michael?"

"And," Michael continued, without pausing to notice my expression of dubious faith, "*words* were said to me. Not close up at my ear, but for all that, in through an' through the ear at the right side of my head the words came. You may give credit to me. The words were said in a whisper like a hiss, through an' through my right ear."

Michael paused as if to recollect himself, and then he went on speaking slowly, and with the impressiveness of one awed by his recollections.

"When 'tis a stormy night ; when 'tis wild and wicked outside of a house ; when the nails that fasten the hinges of the doors are started ; when the bolts and latches are crookened by the blast forcing its way ; and when the window-panes are dashed in about the floor ;—though the noise of the storm within and without is enough to deafen you ;—at the very same time you'll hear the angry wind

screeching through the keyholes above an' below, wherever it finds a keyhole to screech through.

"The words that came through my ear were as plain to hear as the wind screeching through the keyhole in the storm. But the wind through the keyhole only screeches; it doesn't speak words, as that hissing, screeching whisper did. They were the words of a spirit of darkness and wickedness that I heard."

"What were the words you heard, Michael?"

"The words were said in the Irish speech. The Irish speech is plainer to the hearing, it goes to the heart more than the grandest of English does. I'll never, never forget the words screeched into my ear that pitch-dark, teeming, stormy night, up in the churchyard.

"I will say the words in the English for you. The evil spirit said in the Irish, '*He is mine—he is mine—he is mine!*' Three times it said that—'*mine and none to keep him from me, MINE!*' it said then. If you were there to hear them, they'd never quit your mind. They never will quit my

mind. There was no sorrow in the voice that said them, they were screeched like as if the spirit they came from was glorifying afther a victory. You'd say 'twas a screech with gladness in it.

"You look at me as if you didn't give belief to me. But you *may* believe me. Although the marrow in my bones shivered, and although I could feel my blood creeping cold through me, until the heart within was frozen up, an' shrivelled to the size of a grain of corn like:—yet for all that, I had my hearing, an' I heard the evil words.

"I never said to any one, not to the priest himself, or to poor Mary, what I'm going to say to you now. I didn't like to say it because it might look like a sentence passed on my deluded fosther-brother.

"The words I heard screeched were the words of a spirit that had power over the soul an' body of the poor mortal that lay on the grave."

Michael recoiled as he said this, as if he would retreat from his own interpretation.

"As soon as the words were hissed," he con-

tinued, "the cold hard fingers that were tightened round my wrist—this wrist it was, and the mark of the fingers were on it a good while—were loosened, and my arm fell, benumbed like, down against my side. What I took to be a black head-stone, but what, I'm sure, was a spirit of evil, went off from me, inch by inch. Pains were in my eye-balls staring at it, and I could see it through the darkness. Then I saw it standing still, and I knew that it was close by our angel's grave. The dark spirit wasn't standing there more than a moment, when there was a frightful—a terrible cry—that near out took the senses entirely from me. Oh!—it was an awful cry, I can't well tell you what sort of cry it was."

Michael paused and reflected.

"It happened to me once," he continued after a while, "that I heard a very sorrowful cry. Going along the cliffs yonder there was a mother; a young an' comely mother she was, and there was a beautiful little boy sporting before her. And that beautiful boy raced from his mother to the edge of the cliff, and he fell over, an' he tumbled hundreds of

feet down, an' he lay below, disfigured an' dead. The mother screeched, and she screeched so loud an' wild, that the fishermen on the bay, more than three miles off, heard her. But though the cry of that mother was heartrending, it wouldn't go through you like the cry in the churchyard.

"That cry was louder than the roaring of the storm. It was a great, hoarse shout, not sharp and piercing like that of the childless mother. You'd know that it came from the body of a sthrong man, and you'd know that the sthrong man was woe-begone, and you'd know that the woe-begone sthrong man, that gave the long, bewailing shout, was furious in his despair. You'd say it was the shout of a fierce madman, and that it came from a bursting heart.

"The moment I could recover from my terror, I knew that awful cry came from the sthrong man I had left lying on our angel's grave. I made my way to him, as fast as my shaking legs would bring me through the darkness. I put down my hands to touch him. He was not where he lay when I went

from him. He was gone—my poor misguided foster-brother was gone.”

“Gone, Michael!—What do you mean?”

“Gone from us—gone,—gone. And the evil spirit was gone too. I could not see it anywhere, although I knew it had come and stood by the grave.

“The last Christmas-day that passed was the sixth that came and went since that night of woe. From that hour to this I never laid eyes on my poor foster-brother, dead or alive. If the creature was a sinner, he suffered for it, and I never go to my prayers that I don't ask of the Lord that his sufferings may not go beyond this life.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RICHARD O'MEARA'S STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

MICHAEL's statement was literally true. When he had groped and stumbled to the grave of "the angel," the prostrate form of her husband was no longer there. Michael sought with his hands along the newly-erected mound; he could feel only the clammy, disjointed sodding with which the neighbours had covered it before their departure.

In the desperation of extreme terror he called aloud the name of the miserable man he had quitted only a few moments before. His summons was not replied to by the voice he wished to hear, but he was answered by the lad who had remained a watcher during Michael's absence. The boy was

not on the spot where he had been when Michael parted from him. He was a short distance away, unable to make progress in the direction he wished to go, so dense was the darkness, and so numerous the obstacles. Directed by the sound of each other's voices, Michael and he felt their way to each other.

The boy's story was to this effect. Almost immediately following the departure of Michael to seek the Half-pay in the ruin, a dark form stood above the grave, and the young watcher's superstitious dread was agonizing. Some words were spoken by this mysterious visitant; the lad could only catch the sound, but not the meaning.

His father started instantly to his feet. And then it was that he screamed the harrowing cry so much dwelt on by Michael. At once, and while still shouting his despairing lament, he dashed away through the gloom.

Even in the bewilderment of his terror, the child could understand that his father had over and over

again fallen in his progress through the tombs and headstones. The little fellow fearlessly endeavoured to follow. He found this impracticable, and he stood confused, and doubtful how to proceed, when Michael's shout was answered by him.

Difficult no doubt it was, and yet the Half-pay contrived to emerge from the roofless church, and join the other two. They consulted together, and Michael succeeded in descending to the town, where he provided himself with lanterns, and whence his party was reinforced by a few of the boldest of the neighbours, whose love of the marvellous overmastered their fears or stimulated their charity.

The churchyard was searched in every direction, Richard O'Meara was not in the churchyard. On his wife's fresh grave, by holding down the light, the marks of his two knees were visible, and the sodding placed loosely thereon, as the final adjustment of the mound, was found to have been displaced, as Michael explained to the examiners,

when Richard O'Meara cast himself heavily upon it. The mark of the mourner's forehead could also be distinguished ; and in the hollow was a pool of blood, which flowed thence along the grave's sides. Close by the little elevation a hat was found, soiled and trampled out of all shape, and thoroughly saturated with rain. This was Richard O'Meara's hat.

The neighbours agreed that the unfortunate man, bad as he was, was yet deserving of pity. It was evident that he had been bleeding profusely. And was it not a fearful thing that wherever he had gone he was bareheaded, and wounded, under the inclemency of as bleak and dreary a night as any present had ever witnessed ?

Some branches broken from the trees descending the steep hill-side towards the river led to the conjecture that the missing man might have scrambled downwards in that direction. During the quest through the grove, the seekers were joined by the inhabitants of the small houses at the hill-foot. Even within their dwellings, these had been terrified

by the cry uttered by Richard O'Meara. Even above the turmoil of the elements they had heard that cry.

Richard O'Meara was not in the grove on the hill-side. He was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER XL.

THE DRUNKARD'S FATE.

THE day following was Christmas-da. It was a calm day. The storm of the night before had worn itself out, as the fury of a passionate man will become expended. The sky was clear, and frost had set in once more.

Being a holiday, the entire of the inhabitants of "The Town of the Cascades" were engaged in eager commentaries as to the probable fate of Richard O'Meara. The police were officially on the alert, prosecuting their inquiries on the same subject.

Towards midday, persons passing along the heights overhanging the eastern side of the bay near the village of the Bornocha, discovered part of a

man's dress, a short distance inward from the edge of the highest cliff overlooking the sea. There was a pocket in this remnant of attire, and in this pocket letters were found, proving that it had belonged to the missing man; and Michael Hanrahan found no difficulty in identifying it as the skirt of his lost foster-brother's outside coat.

Immediately near the brow of the cliff there was no grass, and the bare soil, partly clay and partly pulverized rock, was soft and yielding, rendered particularly so by the recent heavy snow and rain. Here numerous footprints were distinctly visible, and it was particularly noticed that the mark of the right foot was that of a boot or shoe, while the indent recognized for the print of the left was that of a stocking without other covering. The police did not overlook so evident a tracing. A pair of boots belonging to Richard O'Meara were obtained at the cottage: one of these corresponded accurately with the imprint of the right foot.

There could be no doubt but that the despairing Richard O'Meara had—wonderful to relate

—made his way to the towering cliff at hand, and had thence flung himself headlong into the roaring waves below. The wind had blown inland from the south the night before, and the inhabitants of the little bathing-place pronounced, one and all, that a more violent storm had never uplifted the waters of the bay, that the lower portions of the village had been deluged, and that the waves must have lashed the cliff half way to its summit, when the fearful plunge was made.

Mingled with the human footprints near the cliff were the impressions made by the paws of a dog. A large dog the animal must have been.

When Michael Hanrahan had left his "angel's" grave on the previous night, the dog Teague was there, close by his master's outstretched body. Teague was not to be found from the moment of his master's disappearance. It was plain the attached brute had followed Richard O'Meara to the cliff, and that, self-devoted, he had shared his master's fate. They had plunged together into the sea.

CHAPTER XLI.

LAST TRACES.

“WHAT is the distance, Michael, from the church-yard on the hill to the cliff where the last traces of your unhappy foster-brother were found?”

“It is over an’ above two long Irish miles, as the crow would fly, and as poor Dick O’Meara went.”

“As I viewed the country from the hill-top, it appears to me next to an impossibility that even in the broad daylight any one could take a direct course over such ground. That the track could be followed on the night you have described would be nothing short of the miraculous. There is a road—he must have gone by the road.”

“Poor crature! he did not take to the road.

And 'twas as you say, miraculous, how he could have made to the cliff the way he went. Let your own self set out from the churchyard any day, the brightest that ever shone, and travel the exact ground he took, at your ease an' your leisure, and nothing to throuble you, and if you don't give it up before half the journey is done, I'm mistaken greatly."

"And yet you say he did not go along the road?"

"Of a surety he did not, and I'll tell you why I say that so positively.

"When the search was over for him, and that we made sure of the untimely end of himself—Lord be good to his sowl!—and of our loving dog, I went here and there myself to pick out marks of him. I didn't say to any one but Mary where I was going, or what I was about. But let them talk as they liked, I couldn't get the love for my foster-brother out of my heart, and so I made a pilgrimage like afther him.

"I went my way while the marks were fresh. Sometimes I found tracks of the dog, sometimes of

himself, the mark of his feet, or bits or shreds of his clothes. And so I thravelled on and on. Parts of the way I couldn't follow all out. Although I was at the time an active chap enough of my age, I couldn't swim the river in my clothes; I couldn't throw myself down forty feet or more of a rock, as he did, where there was no resting-place for the foot to fasten; I couldn't climb up rocks straight and smooth as a plastered wall, as sure marks showed me he did. But up the steep hills I went, and down in the deep hollows below them I went, tracking him all along. Through bogs where I sank knee-deep I went, over hedges, and dhrains, and ditches I went, tracking him all the time surely. Do you see that snarling hill over yonder?"

"All I see is hill and hollow; but you mean the hill with the craggy brow rising suddenly above the less prominent acclivities?"

"Send your look by the corner of the white-washed house with the rick of turf close by it."

"I see the hill you point to."

"That hill with the snarling back is called *Ard-na-Cuillagh*."

"Give me the English of *Ard-na-Cuillagh*, Michael."

"*Ard-na-Cuillagh* means 'The High Grove.' There is no grove there now, but in the old times, as the ancient people say, it was all a wood over this country as far as the eye can go, and the wood on *Ard-na-Cuillagh* was high above the rest. Over that hill of *Ard-na-Cuillagh* the poor fellow crossed, as I'll make sure to you.

"When you mount to the brow of *Ard-na-Cuillagh*, and you go down a little way along its side nearest to the sea, mind yourself well; if you do not, down you plunge headlong into a deep quarry, and if you escape the fall you'll have the luck of a four-leaved shamrock. Hard grown bushes, sprouting from the roots of the trees that were there long ago, and briars, and blackberry brambles hide the quarry from you until you're on it. You are minding me?"

"I am, attentively."

“ Guided by my marks, I crossed the hill of *Ard-na-Cuillagh*. I knew there was a quarry on its side, and I had the daylight, and I was careful. I stood on the brow and looked down. On one of the hard grown bushes I saw something I thought I ought to know ; I scrambled for it, and I got it. It was one of the boots worn by the poor lost creature when he disappeared from the churchyard. The boot of the left foot it was.”

“ Ha ! the mark of the left foot above the cliff was that of a stocking, you said ?”

“ You are right enough. ‘ Lord be good to me,’ I said to myself, ‘ he must have tumbled head foremost into the quarry. If it was not for the fastening of his foot in the tough branches here, he would not have ended his life in the sea ; he would never have gone beyond this.’

“ The fall down was stopped when his left foot was entangled in the fork of the bush ; and when the boot parted from him in his struggle to get free, the bottom of the quarry was not far distant

from him. But"—added Michael in a broken voice—"the poor creature must have been sorely mangled and disfigured."

"It is evident from your statement, Michael, that the ill-doomed man did not follow the road when he left the churchyard, and that he must have made his way, over almost insurmountable obstacles, to the fatal cliff."

Michael looked round in apprehension of a listener. The movement was, however, no more than an expression of the confidence he placed in me.

"I said to you before what I now say to you again. It was my judgment at the time, and it is my judgment still, after six years' thinking of it over,—if when the last prayers were said over the angel's grave, and that he knelt at the grave's head, he had not stopped short in the blessing of himself—meaning by that that he gave up hope in God—if he had finished the signing of the cross on himself, and had humbly called on the Holy Trinity for protection, the spirit of evil that stood in the churchyard would not have got the power over him to

carry him along where no Christian could find footing through the darkness, without a spirit's help. And he would not have been dhragged along by the evil spirit to his destruction."

I agree in Michael's doctrine, although I may doubt the reality of its exemplification in this instance. For we know that by the God of mercy the greatest sinners are forbidden to despair.

CHAPTER XLII.

CONCLUSION.

"A good morning to you, Mary."

Mary glanced up at me from her "cobbey-house" in the cliff, the never-absent smile greeting me.

"Are you there, Sir? A bright good morning to you. Come down here, an' roost yourself comfortably."

I accepted Mary's invitation, and took my accustomed seat beside her.

"Well, Sir, you have something to ask me. I know by your face that you have."

"I came for the purpose of making some inquiries certainly."

"So I bethought me. Well, Sir, here I am,

ready an' willing to answer you. 'Tis a great blessing that we can stitch an' talk at the same time. We don't dhrive the needle with the tongue, to be sure,—but I think it goes the merrier when the tongue is busy."

"I presume, Mary, that you changed your name, and were married to Michael Hanrahan shortly after Richard O'Meara's death?"

"'Deed then 'tis no presumption in you to say that, because it was just what turned out. Michael an' myself were a long time coorting, as you know by this time. 'Tis a positive proof that we were taken with one another all out entirely, or we'd never have the patience to wait so long. We'd fight, maybe, an' part company, if our two hearts were not in it, an' if it wasn't *sa creeveen sha* with us. The one of us said to the other in the beginning that we wouldn't be man an' wife while we were so poor entirely, an' nobody to give us a start."

"Your father and mother had no fortune to bestow on you, Mary?"

"I was an orphan girl," answered Mary, "an'

Michael was an orphan boy. 'Twas much of a muchness between us in that way, an' there could be no scrambling for the sake of lucre anyhow—Upon my word," she continued, "when Michael an' I danced the first jig together (it was his beautiful dancing that bewildered me about him), we hadn't so much between us as would pay the piper for his music."

Mary laughed outright at her account of her own and Michael's poverty when Michael jigged himself into her maiden affections.

"But—" Mary checked herself in her glee—"it was wrong of me to say it was the dancing that took the heart from me, and gave it to Michael. It was the dancing first made me cotton to him certainly. But when I came to know him, the more I knew of him the better I thought of him. It wasn't for the dancing all out that I loved my poor Michael; it wasn't for his beauty either—he hadn't over an' above to spare of that at any time. I loved Michael because he was honest and tender-hearted; I loved him because it was he knew how to give the

good advice when I'd be giddy; I loved him because he was a wise boy; I loved him because he was a good Christian. The priest himself couldn't be a betther Christian than Michael was, an' is to the moment. An'—"

Mary's smile now was one of warm affection, irradiating her comely features directly from the heart.

"An' I loved my poor Michael because Michael loved me;—ay indeed did he, with the whole of his heart. He loved me betther than any one else could, the poor fellow. There was no deception in Michael.

"Well, my dear, what would you have of it? As I tould you, we made up our minds not to be man an' wife while we were so poor entirely that we were forced to go in score with the piper that played our first jig together for us.

"Richard O'Meara—Heaven's rest be to his soul!—owed Michael a good sum, an' I put by my wages for years. We made up our minds to open a sthrong huxther's shop in the town beyand, an' to live

like a lord an' a lady on our profits. But when the poor mistress was sick an' in need, my little *caubogue* of a gathering went away bit by bit. We couldn't see her wanting while we had it to give her. An' what Richard O'Meara left behind him wouldn't pay the tithe of what he owed to strangers, an' Michael an' I said we wouldn't put out our hands to make a grab, and let the strangers go empty-handed. So when the bitter misfortune fell on the cottage an' all that lived there, the two of us were low enough, you may be sure.

"Michael looked at me sorrowfully with tears in his eyes. 'What are we to do now, Mary?' he asked of me. 'I'll tell you what we'll do, Michael,' I made answer. 'Here's a thirty-shilling note; it's all we have between us. We'll get married on the strength of the thirty shillings, an' we'll put our trust in God for the time to come,' says I."

"And you married 'on the strength of the thirty-shilling note?'—and you did not establish the 'strong huxter's shop?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!—Huxter's shop, indeed! When

our marriage fee was paid—(for we made no poor mouths to the priest, an' went to it as hearty an' as lofty-headed as if we were the owners of thousands) —when our marriage-fee was paid, an' when we bought our wedding-supper, there wasn't much left to set up the huxter's shop with. 'We'll put our trust in God,' I said to Michael;—an' God didn't desert us. 'Tis a truth, to be sure, that from the very first day we belonged to one another, the current was sthrong against us. But didn't I help Michael, an' didn't Michael help Mary, with a *graw* an' a good will? Indeed we did! I often thought that the scramble we had to make, arm-in-arm, an' shouldher to shouldher, gave us a faith an' a trust in each other we might want if the huxter's shop was making a fortune for us. Howsomever, my honest, loving Michael an' his Mary are contented with their lot. They wouldn't swap husbands or wives with any one, and they're thankful to God for his blessings."

I revered Mary's pious and cheerful acquiescence in the decree that assigned her a life of

struggle and privation ;—this acquiescence evidenced by her look upward, and by her smile of resignation.

She gave me some details descriptive of her matrimonial voyage of six years' duration. Although from the port of departure with the remnant of the "thirty-shilling note" as sea-store, there had been a constant buffet against wave and tide, yet there she was, in her "cobbey-house" in the cliff, ready to dispense what she called "her rusty water" for a very precarious remuneration, while she patched a cravat for Michael, without a frown on her brow, or a murmur of discontent from her lips. On the contrary, she smiled ever—ever.

Very many there are of high station and with the dowry of princesses who might envy her.

"I believe, Mary, the Colonel, as you called him, does not live hereabouts at present. I have not seen him since I took up my residence among the Bornocha, and I think I must have recognized him had I met him, so accurate have been your descriptions and Michael's of him."

“You are right enough, Sir, by my word. He is not here, not a bit of him, an’ no one in this part of the world can tell what became of him.”

“How is that, Mary?”

“I gave you a history before now of one Bridget Scallon, the woman that kept house for the three neighbours above the bridge. Well, my dear, it was the third night after the Christmas-day when Richard O’Meara’s fate was made known, that Bridget Scallon heard the thump of the Colonel’s leg above stairs an’ down stairs, an’ here and there about the house. She was in her kitchen, taking her good, sthrong tay. I tould you how she managed to give it the sthrength.”

“You did. I remember how it was that Bridget contrived to convert weak tea into strong tea.”

“Well, she didn’t disturb herself, poor woman,—the tay was too good. The Curnel’s ways were so curious at all times that she didn’t stir to look afther him. When the fourth cup was finished, she sat on her stool before the bright turf fire, an’ she fell fast asleep. No blame to Bridget; she seldom got a

doze in her bed. She was woke up by some one shaking her as if she was a sack of potatoes that wanted packing. It was the Curnel ; he had her by the shouldher, an' he was rattling her bones in their socketa.

“ ‘Up—shut—the—door,’ says the Curnel to Bridget.” Mary’s imitation of the Half-pay’s gruff, abrupt address was amusing.

“ Bridget found it hard to bruise the sthrong tay from her eyes with her knuckles.

“ ‘Shut—the—door!’ says the Curnel again. Bridget Scallon followed afther him, by her own account, in a kind of a maze. Bridget’s ‘sthrong tay’ would often make her like one that was fairy sthruck. The Curnel went out into the winter’s night, Bridget shut the door, an’ then went back to finish her nap before the kitchen-fire. From that hour to this neither Bridget, nor Michael, nor Toby Purcell, nor any of them could find out where our poor Curnel went. As queer, but as honest-hearted a Curnel he was as any one could know.”

“ Never seen or heard of since, Mary ?”

"He was seen once, an' once for all. The day didn't break the morning after Bridget shut him out until it was beyond seven o'clock. As the day came in, Pat Mulhearn, the carman, coming with goods to the town, met him full twenty miles away. He was punching along the road at a hard rate, an' there was a knapsack, the same that soldiers wear, sthrapped between his shoulders. Walking at his best by the side of the Curnel was a boy of about thirteen years of age. What boy was that, do you think?"

"Let me see. Richard O'Meara's son!"

"The very same it was. Young Dick O'Meara wasn't seen in our town ever since, no more than the Curnel. But I ought to take up my word. The Curnel an' the boy were heard of again in a manner, I may say. Three years after they took a French leave of us a sthrange man came here, a stone-cutter by thrade he was, as he made known to us. He came to Michael, an' Michael went with him, an' showed him the grave of Richard O'Meara's wife. This sthrange stone-cutter fell to work, an'

he put over the grave the tomb where you prayed a prayer the first day I met you, if you remember it."

"I do remember the circumstance, Mary."

"Well, the stranger wouldn't tell who sent him, or where he came from, but we knew from the printing on the tomb who was to be his paymaster. As soon as his job was finished, the strange stone-cutter set off with himself, leaving us to guesswork. And so, sir, you have all we know about our Curnel and young Dick O'Meara. You'd like to learn news of others, maybe."

"Yes, Mary, I came here specially to acquire that knowledge. Ned Culkin—and Tom O'Loughlin—where are they?"

"The workhouse is between this spot where we are and the town. If you go there, an' go into the place where they shut up the sick people that haven't house or home of their own, nor any one to care for them, there you'll find Ned Culkin. Toby Purcell had some joke about him that Michael repeated to me, an' that used to make the neighbours laugh, but

Michael and myself could see no joke in it, and Michael said it wasn't charity to make merry over the misfortunes of others."

"Do you happen to remember Toby Purcell's joke, Mary?"

"I do. It was something about Ned Culkin being a gauger, an' losing entirely the use of his limbs. 'How do you prove that Ned Culkin is a broken gauger?' Toby Purcell would ask of some one. An' when they'd be thinking an' thinking, he'd give the answer himself, an' you'd suppose by him that he said something comical. 'I'll tell you,' Toby would say, 'because he has lost his walk.'"

"A very lame jest of Toby Purcell's, Mary."

"It is you I believe. If you have a fancy to visit Ned Culkin lying without the power to put his limbs undher him, the door of the workhouse will be opened for you by a shrivelled up 'natomy of a little elderly man, with his shoulders up to his ears, an' his two hands rubbing each other ever an' always. If you look at him you'll see all that's left of the decayed gentleman."

"One other person I wish to hear of—Nora Spruhan?"

"Before I tell you of Nora Spruhan, let your own eyes bear witness for you. Get up an' go a little distance farther along the cliffs. Walk on until you come to the highest cliff above the bay. If I don't mistake very much, you'll see a woman sitting on the very brow of that high cliff. You'll know that she isn't old, an' you'll wondher if she can be young; go an' see her for yourself. If you have money about you, bestow on her an alms: she won't crave from you, but she will take it if you offer it. Poor crature, she is in need of charity. When you come back I will tell you all you will want to know about Nora Spruhan."

I followed Mary's instructions, and reached the spot she had indicated. There, as she had foretold, a female was sitting on the far-projecting ledge of a rock that overhung the bay. The sea boomed sullenly two hundred feet below.

Her person was wrapped in a long, tattered, blue mantle, such as the Irish peasantry of the old school

wear. The hood of this mantle was on her head, her bare feet dangled over the precipice. Her body was bent forwards, and though her face was hidden from me, I could perceive that she was gazing straight forward, out to sea. She did not note or heed my footsteps as I approached. I bade her good-day. She did not return my salutation, but she turned her head and looked vacantly at me, without inquiry or interest in her sunken black eyes. While she looked, I saw that her cheeks were hollow and without colour, save that of sunburn and exposure. Her full lips were close, and there were lines down from them, expressive of settled melancholy. Her jetty hair flowed uncared for from beneath her hood, covering her forehead, and partially her face. I held some money towards her; the arm protruded from her shrouding mantle was wasted and shrivelled. She made no acknowledgment of the gift, but holding it fast clutched, she gathered the mantle round her again, and resumed her outward gaze as before.

“Have you seen her?” Mary asked, as I rejoined her.

"I have, Mary. If this be Nora Spruhan, I could trace few remains of the beauty you have described. She is an object of compassion."

"To be pitied she is. Well, the crature you saw is Nora Spruhan. From the time of Richard O'Meara's loss, her reason went. She said to Michael that she had caused his downfall, and that his ghost haunted her. She creeps about the town an' counthry, speaking little to any one. She would not seek for a roof to cover her at night, but people bring her in an' shelther her. She never asks for charity, but she will take what is given her. Whatever she receives in the day she will leave where she is lodged an' fed at night. She spends most of her time sitting where you found her. It is the spot from which Richard O'Meara plunged to his death. It is said she spends the night there, if no charitable neighbour gives her the covering of a roof. If Nora Spruhan was not what she ought to be, 'tis God's will that she suffers for it here, and my prayer is that He will be good to her hereafter."

A SEQUEL TO MY NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER EXPLANATORY.

THE term of my vacation having expired, I quitted the Bornoeh village to resume my home duties. By-the-way, I would recommend such of my friends as are not over-fastidious about accommodation and so forth to become "*Forneyaghs*" by all means for a few weeks of the autumn, and I venture to promise them a return home with renovated health.

When I ceased to be a Forneyagh, it was with the impression that I was bidding a final farewell to my friend, the anomalous Michael Hanrahan, and to his cheery-hearted Mary. But in this supposition I was mistaken.

Some years subsequently, when again quitting my daily labours for my short holiday, I journeyed through a different part of the country, at the opposite extremity of Ireland, I may say.

I was seated on one of those exclusively Irish conveyances, an "outside car." I had, for some time, been passing an enclosed demesne. Here and there I could obtain glimpses of the grounds. I could see grassy hillocks, and declivities, some sun-lighted, some in shadow, and the shadow passing off and giving place to sunlight, and again the sunny spots dimmed by shadows, as the autumn clouds sailed on. On an elevation a short distance from the road, there was a mansion not of recent erection, as the style of architecture told. It was surrounded by noble, aristocratic trees; woods mounted behind the house,—ancient woods they appeared to be,—and I caught the reflection of the brilliant but not oppressive sun, in a river that flowed below it.

I enjoyed so vividly the rich and varied landscape on either side, that I proceeded at a leisurely pace, permitting the horse to poke his head downward

that he might relieve the hitherto erect position of his neck, and yawn away the tugging of the bit.

Approaching the entrance gate to the demesne and mansion I had been admiring, I observed a person in advance of me, whose almost unique personalities at once arrested my attention.

"Can it be possible?" was my self-inquiry. "*Can* this be my Bornoch acquaintance, the waiter of the little hotel there; my well-individualized and esteemed crony, Michael Hanrahan?"

The person thus speculated on walked directly from me; his back towards me. He was low in stature; Michael Hanrahan was of the same elevation to a hair. When Michael Hanrahan walked, there was a wobble at the knee-joints, an imperfect fitting of the boles and sockets thereabouts producing, as I judged, this peculiar suppleness of limb. The knee-joints of the person before me rolled in the sockets also. The head somewhat inclined to the right shoulder was Michael Hanrahan's method of wearing his head too. In his capacity of waiter, I had never but once seen a hat or a cap on

Michael Hanrahan: Michael's hair was jet-black, abundant, and lank. The little fellow I examined was bareheaded, his hair was jet-black, abundant, and lank. I was almost certain of my man.

But there was one peculiarity of movement not identical. The individual I surveyed swayed his body very much to the right and left as he progressed. Michael Hanrahan, during my intimacy with him, did not carry himself so.

But what could this possibly be hanging pendant from the left shoulder of this three-fourths yes, and one-fourth no, Michael Hanrahan, which swayed pendulum like with the motion of the bearer?

I descended from my "outside car," directing the driver to remain stationary, and I advanced as noiselessly as I could to take close scrutiny. When near enough for certainty, I discovered to my surprise, that the pendant object was a pudding-shaped sack, above which a diminutive human face, and two diminutive hands protruded. The bearer of this fardel was singing.

"Michael Hanrahan's goldfinch quaver to a dead

certainty!" I assured myself. I could not at the moment catch distinctly the words of the ditty, but I was favoured with them subsequently. The air was a lullaby, and there was a mingling of drollery and pathos in it.

The vocalist turned short round. Down his breast, from the left shoulder also, was a second pudding-shaped sack, and above it a second diminutive face, and a second pair of diminutive hands. Michael Hanrahan, the veritable Michael Hanrahan, of the Bornoeh village, confronted me not four paces distant.

He stopped, opened his large grey eyes wide, and stared at me. Then his capacious mouth expanded right and left, to an almost fabulous extent, to produce a smile of recognition.

"As I hope for mercy," he exclaimed, raising both his hands; "it is nobody else but Mr. ——— that I see standing there forment me,—nobody else but himself. Oh, then! ain't I proud entirely to see you not looking an hour owlder than you were this time four years. Faith, I'm proud entirely."

Michael and I shook hands; our greeting was cordial. I esteemed Michael, and Michael was attached to me.

"Michael Hanrahan," I said, and I could not control my laughter while I put my question, "this is an odd kind of harness I see on you. Where to, in the name of goodness, are you conveying the children, and why in this singular manner?"

"I'm nursing, as in duty bound, and as all tendher parients ought to do. They're a brace o twins, Sir, if you plaise. This little crature" — gently smoothing the head surmounting the sack in front—"belongs to the faymale sex. And this" —turning his back that I might view the other—"is a little boy, God bless it. They were sent into the world, Lord be praised for all his blessings, hot-foot, the one afther the other. Mary here is the eldest, by five minutes or so, an' for that raison she's to the front along my heart. Michael, here behind, is by coorse the youngest, by five minutes or so."

He put himself into the wavy motion I had

noticed as not identical with the Michael Hanrahan I had known, and he crooned the lullaby I had before heard :—

“Och mavrone! that ever I married;—
It leaves me here for to sigh an’ to weep,—
Moaning an’ groaning an’ rocking the cradle,
An’ plaising a child that won’t go to sleep.”

There was a cool waggery in Michael’s manner, while he affected seriousness, that stimulated my mirth again.

“I’ll be thankful if you don’t laugh so hearty, Sir,” he expostulated; “or you’ll rouse up the twins. If it cost you as much as it cost me to shut their eyes, I go bail you wouldn’t shout so loud. Huzz-o-o—Huz-zoo-oo-oo!—

“Och mavrone, etc.”

“Well, Michael, excuse me. But positively, the novelty of your contrivance, for which you certainly deserve a patent, and your manner of explanation are too provocative. But I will laugh underhand.”

And suiting the action to the word, I placed both

my hands before my face, and laughed *sotto voce* until I was satisfied.

“Undher hand sure enough, by gor,” I heard Michael remark; and as I removed my veil I saw that he himself was grimacing at a furious rate, in his endeavour to control his mirth.

“I’ll tell you honestly how the bright notion came into my head,” said Michael.

“They wanted Mary up at the house very bad, Mary is their brains-carrier, you must know. ‘Michael,’ she says to me, wriggling her head, and shaking her fist within an inch of my nose,— ‘Michael,’ she says, ‘mind the childre well while I’m from them. If you don’t, I’ll blacken the eye in your head when I come back.’ An’ with that, off she set. To keep my eye from being bulged out, I took on to do Mary’s bidding. Ullaloo! if it wasn’t an out-of-the-way job she gave me. Chickens don’t take to the cock, somehow. They tossed an’ they tumbled, an’ they clawed at aich other in the cradle, an’ the squallin’ of ’em brought the tears into my eyes:—I found out that the cock can

cry over the chickens though he can't cluck for 'em rightly. 'Come,' says I, 'in the name of the Lord I'll thry a way of my own with ye.' I took the throwers out of the box, and I measured the childre to it to a nicety. Mary is a quarther of an inch lengthier than Michael,—she grew that much in the five minutes start that she had. I tied the legs of the throwers, as you may behold, to match their size. I scrooged Mary into this leg an' Michael into the other; you'd think 'twas into Paradise they got, when 'twas only into the legs of the throwers they were squeezed. I slung 'em over my shouldher, as you may observe; I sang my croonawn for them, rocking them as I marched, hither an' thither, in the way you saw. And aren't they in a nate, natural sleep, the poor things,—aren't they, now?"

"You have succeeded admirably, Michael, in your experiment at clucking."

"I think 'twas worth your while to come the long journey you took, Sir, to bring the plan home with you."

"So it was, Michael."

"And I think Mary won't make war against my eye with her great big fist, that isn't much over twice the size of her weeny namesake's fist."

Michael inserted his forefinger against the tiny palm of the infant Mary's hand, which hung drooping down from her "leg of the throwers," and although the little head hung to one side helplessly, still the sleeping child acknowledged the object of its touch by grasping it.

"Well, well, well," Michael said, as gently and as tenderly as if he had ceased to be the crowing, strutting chanticleer, and had been transformed into the plaintive, motherly hen of the "brace of twins,"—"Well, well, well, little doowshy Mary, you have the love for me, I do think. You have the very features of the other Mary, an' 'tis my prayer for you that you may be like her in every way, within an' without. May God be your safeguard, my weeshy child, and grant you his grace. An' may you grow up as comely an' as good as the mother that bore you."

Michael laid his cheek gently on the drooping head of the infant he apostrophized. He raised it again, and cautiously holding up the finger round which those of the baby had twined,—

“Isn’t that very purty—very purty, Sir?” he asked. “It puts me in mind of the woodbine that is too puny to hold up its own head, an’ that twines round the stout bush to support it.

“Ay,” he continued, following out his simple comparison,—“and that rewards the support it gets by bedizening the bush it creeps through with bunches of flowers, pleasant to the eye an’ sweet smelling.”

Michael’s paternal affection, and Michael’s rather poetical expression of it, made me almost forget the ludicrousness of his nursing accoutrements.

“I little expected, Michael, to meet you here, fully two hundred miles from the spot where I left you when I bade good-bye to you and the bornochs.”

“And I had no more notion at that time, Sir, of standing on this spot, than I had of flying sky-high. Little did I think at the time that I’d be so well off at the present day. Mary and myself live

here in the lodge inside the gate. We have a beautiful garden ; we have cattle an' sheep on the demesne ; we have fine wages ; plenty within and without we have, as you may partly see ;" and Michael looked down at Mary as she slept along his breast, and glanced over his shoulder at the junior Michael on his back.

"And Mary?—she is as well, I hope, and I dare say as handsome and as cheerful, as when she and I were such close friends?"

"The Lord bless you, Sir, Mary is out-an'-out more blooming and more comely than the day we married, and 'twould not be easy to match her then. As slick as a mouse, and as plump as a partridge, Mary is. She was neat an' tidy when she was obliged to wear the wrong side of the gown turned out the week days, to have the right side clane for Sunday,—and when the legs were bare six days out of the seven, to make the stockings hold out for going to mass. Now 'twould pleasure you to look at her in her new feathers after the moulting. Mary an' myself had a hard tussle with poverty

unbeknown to the world. She didn't repine, and she had a cheerful heart in our blackest days. And God has rewarded her for being satisfied with His will."

"You were not jealous, Michael, of the intimate terms I was on with your Mary?"

"Ho, ho, ho!—jealous inagh!—jealous of Mary? I didn't care if the bravest, an' best-bedizened, an' best-looking buck that ever made it the business of his life to delude faymales,—and such there are in plenty, as I happen to know,—was to make up to Mary. Mary would be the one to show my gallant hero his distance. Mary is a good Christian an' a faithful wife."

Michael paused a moment, and his mouth expanded.

"More be token," he added, "she was safe enough with you. You wern't over young, Sir, and—"

Michael left this sentence unfinished, but he cast his eye from my figure to his own, in evident self-appreciation—comfortably satisfied that personal appearance was all in his own favour.

"Michael!—Michael!—Michael!—"

A female voice, thrice calling Michael's name here interrupted our conversation.

"Now," said Michael, with a self-approving expansion of the lips, and a shrewd wink at me, "now for the blackening of my eye with the heavy fist."

Mary, with a look of consternation, made her appearance outside the entrance gate. She held forth both her hands beseechingly.

"Michael, Michael, Michael!" she again cried, "where are the childre?—What did you do with them?"

Michael advanced towards her at a leisurely pace, rocking his body, thereby to see-saw the children, singing as he went:—

"Och mavrone! that ever I married;—

It laves me here for to sigh an' to weep,—

Moaning an' groaning an' rocking the cradle,

An' plaising a child that won't go to sleep."

I looked on at the meeting between Michael and Mary. The former did not seem to apprehend

the threatened attack on his eye ; he went directly on as I have described. Mary gazed at him as he approached, her hands still extended. There was a conviction that the "childre" were safe, but a puzzle as to the reason for her conviction. When Michael came close to her, still singing his lullaby, the two extended hands smote each other rapidly, somewhat in the spirit of the delighted applause bestowed in theatres on successful artistes. And Mary's laugh, coming from the heart, rang clear and musical. If you are within earshot of merry laughter that has nothing mocking or ill-natured in it, even although you be ignorant of the incentive, you feel compelled to join chorus—just as you yawn involuntarily for companionship. And my laughter mingled with Mary's. Still Michael was, to all appearance, serious. I saw him carefully remove "the brace of twins" from his own to Mary's shoulder, Mary accommodating herself to receive the load, her gleeish laughter still continuing. Young Mary and young Michael were awakened from their "nate, natural sleep" by their mother's outgiven

mirth. They were extracted from their imprisonment, not without management, Michael holding on at the extremity of the trousers' legs while Mary drew forth her offspring. They were lodged safely in her arms, where they nestled.

It was only now my presence was recognized, and Mary advanced to me blithely. Both her arms were clasped round "the brace of twins," and they crossed over each other at the wrists.

"If you *must* shake my hands, Sir," she said, her laughter subsiding to a bland, happy smile, "you'll have to take them cross-barred as they are. Indeed an' indeed, it makes me glad to see you, and to see you so well."

Beyond a question Mary justified Michael's boast. Michael went as far back as the day of his marriage;—whatever she might then have been, she was now "more blooming and more comely" certainly, than she had been when her contribution to the household revenue arose from her dispensation of "rusty water" to the Forneyaghs who sought it.

From her snow-white muslin cap, decorated tastily with glossy pink ribbons,—which cap, by-the-way, was fixed on with ever-so-little of a coquettish to-one-sidedness,—from this saucy little cap down to her spotless white stockings and neatly-fitting, well-polished shoes (Michael was famous in his capacity of “boots”), there was that visible care of arrangement, and that becomingness of attire, which, while displaying her embonpoint to advantage, was a direct indication of a well-arranged mind.

If, to use Michael’s language again, while she and the same Michael had had “a hard tussle with poverty” there was ever a smile of resignation and peace, often of innocent merriment, on Mary’s face, the smile was now radiant, as well it might be, seeing that she had now a wren’s nest of a house to live in, good wages, a beautiful garden, and grass on the demesne for as many head of sheep and cattle as she and Michael could collect. Oh! Mary and Michael were a wealthy and a happy couple indeed.

While I shook her hands so cautiously as not to

disturb the twins, I caught Michael's proud eye travelling from his Mary to me, and from me to his Mary, with the easy-to-be-understood query beaming from it.

"Well, Sir, and what do you think of Mary now?"

And I did not fail to exchange with Michael a glance which meant—

"I wish you joy, Michael, of your brace of twins, and I congratulate you on the possession of their blooming nurse."

I need scarcely say that up to this, being ignorant of the means by which my honest friends had progressed to such an enviable and unanticipated point of elevation, I was anxious to learn how their fortunes had so altered.

There was a considerable town within half a mile of our place of meeting. I put up my quarters there for two days, at the request of Mary and Michael;—during that time my curiosity was satisfied.

The history of Michael and his Mary's prosperity, is, properly speaking, an addendum to the preceding narrative of a drunkard's career. I will therefore add what I learned during my stay, by way of Sequel.

SEQUEL.—CHAPTER I.

THE DARK BEGGAR-MAN ON THE BRIDGE.

It was the eve of Christmas-day.

On Christmas-eve, nine years antecedent to the occurrences taken up as a sequel, the body of Ellen O'Meara had been laid in the hill-top churchyard, overlooking what I have called "The Town of the Cascades." Nine years antecedent, Ellen O'Meara's erring widower had made his way over almost insurmountable obstacles, taking into account the murkiness and inclemency of the night, to the highest cliff overhanging the "Bornoch" bay.

Within half a mile or so of the lodge wherein, after a lapse of three years, I found Michael Hanrahan and his Mary so prosperously and so enviably

located, was the large county town of —. This county town was nearly two hundred good Irish miles distant from "The Town of the Cascades." Its name or its locality I am not at liberty to indicate.

The county town of — was divided into two unequal portions by a broad, pellucid river, which flowed through it after passing what I will take the liberty of calling the Mansion house of Michael and Mary Hanrahan. This river I had noticed glittering in the sunlight, below the house, while I made my observations from the road.

It was, as I have said, the eve of Christmas-day, and this particular Christmas-eve fell on a Wednesday. Wednesday was also a market day in the county town of —, and from both causes the town was full of busy people.

From the surrounding country district, the peasantry, in particular the female peasantry, thronged in with carts and baskets full of turkeys, geese, ducks, young cocks, and pullets. The turkeys as they progressed through the bewildering continuation of houses, through the bustle around them,

and through the constant succession of strange faces, gazed about in silent wonder. The geese often screamed angrily, and often gabbled impatiently, as they delivered their opinions touching the strange and unwelcome sights they were compelled to witness. The ducks made frequent loud expostulations as they were borne along. The cocks were often clamorous and indignant; but the pullets, sleek of feather, were for the most part sad and dejected,—Turkeys, geese, ducks, cocks, and pullets were all puzzled, however, to comprehend why they had been rudely manacled, why they had been fettered in ill-assorted pairs (always the case), and why they had been forced, without reference to their wishes, to visit such unimagined and such uncongenial scenes.

Alas! their prevoyance had not enabled them to foresee the drift of all the attention to their appetites, their likings, and their comforts, hitherto bestowed on them. They knew not at the time that this was all selfishness and deception on the part of those they regarded as disinterested, fast friends; that all this apparent kindness was nothing more than

a hypocritical prelude to their destination as regal Christmas fare on the tables of the residents of their county town.

A providential shortsightedness was theirs : had they been endowed with prescience, they would not have disported through their native fields, their native streams, their ponds, their farmyards. Let us ask ourselves how many of us act more in accordance with our premonitive superiority.

The markets of the county town were largely supplied with other rural produce, exclusive of the betrayed feathered visitants ; the shops were busy, one and all ; and throughout the short winter day, as fast as sales were made and purchases perfected, every road leading countrywards was alive and merry with the returners home, freighted with Christmas fare and Christmas presents for their own firesides.

A bridge and a blind man, or dark man, as we say in Ireland, have been associated in my mind from my earliest childhood. All who have read that book of books, the Arabian Nights' Entertainment, will bear in mind that on the bridge of Bag-

dad, in the extreme east, and at a distant day, a dark man had located himself to crave alms. Here in the extreme west of Europe, and up to a very recent period, there was scarce one bridge connected with a town, or even village, untenanted by its own dark man. And the association between the bridge and the blind man is of such long standing with me, that I cannot help feeling as I pass a bridge, as if it were denuded of its furniture, and not to the full extent fulfilling the purpose of its erection, when no "dark man" is there to urge his beggar's petition.

On the particular Christmas-eve now to be recorded, not less than three "dark men," had at an early hour of the day taken their station on the bridge of the county town of —, to receive the alms so liberally dispensed by the incessant stream of passengers. At Christmas the gripe even of the miserly relaxes somewhat, while the hand of the benevolent opens freely, and shares to the utmost extent of means with the needy.

In the beggar's profession, as in all professions, there is a gradus and a status. Even with beggars

there is a field for the development of talent, and a scope for the flight of genius. And there are to be found practising the craft, mere matter-of-fact beggars, beggars beyond mediocrity, and beggars of distinction in their calling. Further,—there is a scintillation of poetry from the Irish character, confined to no rank, and eliminating under all imaginable phases. So that the eminent Irish beggar is, for the most part, a poetic beggar also.

Properly speaking, the sequel of my narrative has connection with only one of the dark men on the bridge of the county town of —, yet for the sake of contrast I am led to notice the other two.

At the ascent of the bridge, at one end, a low and somewhat corpulent dark man, with a round, ruddy face, deeply indented by the disease that in childhood had deprived him of sight, was placed. He knelt humbly on a boss, or round stool formed of straw. He supported himself in this position by leaning with one hand on his long and stout professional staff, while in the other he held a wooden platter to receive the Christmas offerings. A bene-

volent observer, while searching for a halfpenny to lay on the platter, noticed to another similarly occupied that the dark man must not have been at home when he was measured for his coat. The friend to whom the remark was made understood it to mean, either that the garment had been put together without even a remote reference to the height or bulk of the wearer, or that it had been cut to the measure of some one ever so much taller and bulkier than its present occupant. The coat so criticised was of the stoutest and warmest grey frieze; its tails extended considerably beyond the heels of the dark man as he knelt and rested in the puddle. The collar rose so high at the back of his head as nearly to displace the battered hat above it; the wooden skewer which should have fastened it in front was under his right arm, and the sleeves were turned back as far as the elbows, to permit the protrusion of the hands.

This dark man was not eminent in his profession. His appeal of "Give a charity to the blind" was repeated over and over again. No variety of words,

or change of intonation. Yet let merit be given where merit is due. The appealing humility of his position appeared to be a well-devised substitute for lack of genius. Halfpence, occasionally pieces of bread, and even tobacco, came fast to his platter. He received alms in kind, as well as in coin, and those who had no money shared their next valuable commodity with him.

At the opposite ascent of the bridge was a second dark man. This rival levier of contributions was tall of stature and robust of frame. His face, even wanting the significance of the eyes, was such as you would place on the shoulders of your ideal man of eminence. His lips were decisively chiselled, and capable of the most varied inflexion; his nose was cast in the Roman mould, and his forehead was high, and expansive at the temples. His was a face that would arrest your attention and invite your study. Were he not a blind beggar, eminent as such, you would say that he should have taken the lead in some other more imposing position.

He was seated on one of the upright stones placed

along the bridge to prevent the inroad of vehicles to the footway. His glistening, jet-black locks—(he had as yet hardly seen his fortieth year)—escaped in profusion from the tasselled cotton nightcap covering his head. His staff was between his knees, and rested against his broad chest ; in his left hand he held his hat for the reception of benefactions ; with his right he gesticulated energetically,—ay, and even oratorically and gracefully. He turned on his stone seat as on a pivot, directing his words, now to the left, now to the right, now directly to the front. His sonorous and well-modulated voice was heard long before you reached him ; and its cadences were so musical that it drew you to listen.

I have said that the eminent Irish beggar is a poetic beggar. And this dark man enounced his claims to the sympathy of the passengers as a genuine poetic Irish beggar can alone attain to, and in this wise :—

“ Christian people, open your hearts of charity to the blind,—

“ To the blind who cannot see the blessed light that shines for you.

“ And from the heart of charity let the hand of charity be extended

“ With relief, to the dark man afflicted by the Lord.

“ The Lord has taken away the sight of my eyes, blessed be His name!

“ And the Lord has said to the Christian man and woman—

“ ‘ Relieve the blind man in darkness by My will.’

“ Give your charity, Christian people, for the Lord’s sake—

“ Give your charity, that it may be a store laid up in Heaven for you.

“ Give your charity for the sake of your poor soul,

“ That you carry with you, nursing it in its cradle of sin ;

“ Nursing it for a world to come.

“ Where it will be born again—

“ Born for sorrow,

“ Or, born for glory !—

“ Give your charity and earn the prayers of the blind of God !”

The humble dark man fared well the Christmas-eve I tell of. But the benefactions poured into the hat of this eloquent and poetic dark man at a marvellous rate.

The third dark man, and with him my business lies, stood above the centre arch of the bridge, his back resting against the balustrade. He was tall, six feet in height, if not taller,—his person in perfect symmetry and proportion with his stature. He

might be fifty, or nearly so, but this it was not easy to determine. There were no wrinkles in his oval face, but although his whiskers were black, his hair was white. His head was thrown back somewhat; his sightless eyes were for the most part closed, yet occasionally the lids were raised from them. His finely-formed lips were hard-pressed together with an expression of deep, sombre sadness—sadness as if it were the gloom of a night that was to see no morrow.

His attire was of fine material, and well-fitting to his person. It was threadbare and much worn, but not ragged. It had been patched in many places, to conceal the rents made by time, and it was carefully brushed. Very remarkable, regarding him as a dark man craving charity, his linen, as seen at his breast and above his black silk handkerchief, was unsoiled and perfectly white. There is great significance of character—in the position of a hat on the wearer's head, and a fashion adopted in youth will, in most cases, be the fashion through life. In the instance of the dark man I am now

noticing, his hat was placed somewhat to the left side of his head, and imparted to his air a tinge of levity in strong and strange contrast with the sorrow of his face.

This dark man was not eloquent, as was he of the pivot; nor was he lowly like him of the ill-fitting coat. He was altogether silent, his open left hand was stretched out from him, while with his right he leaned upon his staff.

Both of the other beggars had been frequently on the bridge before;—indeed the wearer of the ill-fitting coat was a fixture there. 'This silent dark man had never begged there until this Christmas-eve. Neither the eloquence of the eloquent beggar, nor the humility of the humble beggar drew as much attention or created as much commiseration as the silent appeal of the new-comer.

Both of the others had the advantage of position. They encountered the passers of the bridge at either end. Yet scarcely one went by without momentarily pausing to scan this taciturn dark man. Not one so pausing and examining that did not come to the

conclusion that begging was a new occupation to him,—that he had seen better days,—that he had met with heavy calamity,—and that his heart had been crushed beneath the weight of his sorrows. Few of the observers who could command a humble offering passed by without laying it in his outstretched palm. And not one of the sympathizers who did not remark that the palm so extended was smooth, and had never been hardened by laborious occupation.

The offerings in the outstretched palm were abundant, and the simple “May God bless you!” of the recipient was received as ample return.

There was a singularity connected with this sad and silent beggar that drew as much, if not more, attention than the man himself. A blind man, and a blind man’s dog, are close associations. Well skilled the blind man’s dog ever is in his vocation. I never saw one so occupied that did not appear to understand his duty thoroughly, and to discharge it *con amore*.

The silent and sad dark man was not without his

canine companion, but the relation between them seemed to be reversed. "The car before the horse," it was shrewdly remarked to be. From appearances it was plain that in the present instance the blind man was the guide, not, as in all other cases, the follower, instructed by the sagacity of his dog.

In contact with the dark man's feet, as he stood patiently with outstretched hand, was a small four-wheeled cart, the string from which was passed round his wrist, and on a bed of fine and soft hay within this cart lay a dog. A large dog this was. To judge by the white muzzle resting on the edge of the rudely-fashioned machine, he was an aged dog—a very aged dog. His eyes, too, which in a dog of prime are so brilliant and expressive, gazed with lack-lustre vagueness at the objects moving within his contracted vision. Twice or thrice in the course of the day the animal crept, with much difficulty, out of his enclosure, staggered a little distance, returned, smelled to the blind man's legs, and lay down again within his cart.

On these occasions it was noted that the hair of the poor brute's coat was scant and staring ; that he was attenuated and lank ; that his head poked down helplessly ; that his ears drooped heavily, and that his tail hung at full length, inert, and incapable of expressing sentiment or opinion. His bones seemed to be held together by the covering of the hide alone, while his limbs discharged their office in support or motion languidly and ineffectually. Yes—he was a very aged dog. A fine dog he must have been in his day, but now the termination of his existence from sheer age must be near at hand.

Was it not beyond precedent that this useless old dog should be so cared for in his infirmity ? It certainly was a providence seldom if ever witnessed. That silent and sad dark man must have an affectionate heart. It was evident to those who compared notes on the matter that the dog had done his duty by him as long as his strength remained, and now the dark man cherished his faithful companion in his last days.

Neither the dark man on the pivot by his eloquence, nor the kneeling dark man by the lowliness of his humility, drew more sympathy from the passengers over the bridge than did the silent dark man by his gratitude and affection for his worn-out dog.

* * * *

As night closed in, the passengers over the bridge were few. Suddenly an energetic woman of middle age, clad in homely but comfortable guise, pounced on the kneeling dark man.

"We'll be going," she announced in a hasty whisper.

"That's Judy?"

"Yes, Darby. Stand up an' let us face home."

Judy assisted Darby to rise. The tails of the coat made to a measure for which he "was not at home" rested in the puddle when he stood to his full erectness. Judy shook the right skirt anxiously. It was very weighty, and in it a significant jingle.

"A great day, Darby, Lord be praised."

"Never a better day this many years, Judy."

Darby placed his hand on Judy's shoulder, and away the dark man and his wife went in a trot, in gleeish but subdued colloquy.

* * * *

"Are you there?" the eloquent dark man on the pivot asked in a deep undertone.

"Here I am, sure enough."

He had a wife too;—she had for a short time been waiting near.

"What have you for supper?"

"Everything that's good."

"What is it?"

"Pig's cheek an' mealy potatoes."

"What else?"

"A quart of pale butt."

"Well?"

"Tay an' toast, if 'tis your fancy."

"Well?"

"A pint of the crathure—eh?"

"That'll do. Now step out like a greyhound. I'm starved wid the hunger—I'm perished wid the

could. I'm dhry as unslaked lime, bawling and shouting here from day-dawn."

And off went the poetic dark man to his abundant supper.

* * * *

The silent man stooped down, and felt that his ancient dog was in his cart. He patted him with his hand, and feeling his way step by step, with his long piked staff, and drawing the dog's cart after him, he moved onward.

He descended the bridge, and entered the street of the town. He stopped occasionally to inquire his way, and it was a pleasing thing to see how he was conducted along.

Little children left their play, and took him by the hand, and led him on a while, then consigning him to other little children who stilled their shout, and received the dark man's hand reverently. And he was given in charge to old men, who led him carefully and gently onward. And young men agog for their evening's pastime took charge of him. And from the young men's care he passed into the charge

of girls full of their maiden merriment, and his lowly "God bless you!" as he parted from each conductor was sufficient guerdon. In this wise the dark man, drawing his dog's cart, passed through the town and into the country, where the direct road was under his feet.

CHAPTER II.

PHIL MONAHAN, THE DARK MAN, AND HIS NEW
FRIEND.

WHEN a short distance from the town, the blind man and his ancient dog went on unguided, save that occasionally the dog's conductor inquired his way from any chance passenger. He had advanced about half a mile beyond the precincts of the town, and had reached the entrance gate, in the lodge of which I subsequently found Michael Hanrahan and Mary. Here he was interrupted in his progress.

A very inebriated man followed along the same road. He occasionally stood stock still, and entered into serious expostulation with himself regarding the sin of intemperance. It would appear, from the

nature of the controversy carried on, that two beings were somehow resident within the same individual ; one of these accusing the other of drunkenness, the other repelling the charge as a calumny advanced by a vile defamer, so drunk that "he could not see a hole in a forty-foot ladder," and who somehow mistook the perfectly sober Phil Monahan for himself. And Phil Monahan, having the best of the argument on his side in these frequent disputations, would express his sense of victory by a shout—which shout went far as evidence against himself. Simultaneous with the shout that rang far and near, Phil Monahan generally set forward at his tip-top speed. Occasionally he fell headlong,—no, not Phil Monahan, but the other fellow. And then there was a renewed contention between the sober and the drunken man ; then another shout, and then another race.

Opposite the entrance gate he came up with the blind man.

"Hurroo !" he exclaimed, in tipsy indignation. "What is this for ? Isn't that a dog I see there ?—

Yea, I'm not purblind ; the sighthe of my eyes tells me that it is a dog—a poor, honest dog, tied neck an' heels, an' a cursed peeler dragging him to the lock-up on the sthretcher. Maybe the dog took a few glasses—over much—an' no blame in the Christmas times. The peeler sha'n't put you in the lock-up, my dog. Get up!—get up an' come with your friend Phil Monahan ! You shall not be taken to the lock-up,—if there was a score of peelers. Get up, poor dog—get up !”

To evidence his intention of being the dog's deliverer from thralldom, he kicked the object of his chivalry, and the enfeebled brute whined piteously.

The dark man suddenly turned, and seized the champion by the collar. Phil Monahan was no diminutive specimen of the human race,—a good-sized, short-built fellow, he was on the contrary,—but the dark man shook him as if he were a dwarf. For a moment he appeared irritated ; but his anger passed away.

“ Unhappy man, you are drunk !” he said, in a calm but impressive voice.

Indignantly and clamorously the slander was repelled. The blind man was a lying, false-swearing peeler; and Phil Monahan detested peelers, and was able to conquer a whole battalion of them!

Nor did he declare his hostility to peelers, and his purpose of onslaught, in mild accents. He roared out his threats in the furious manner in which outraged and slandered sober men will express their feelings.

The passers-by stopped to learn the cause of contention. Phil Monahan's voice rose to such a pitch, that persons at a distance heard him. Many ran fast to witness, as they hoped, a scrimmage, and twenty or more spectators were quickly assembled.

Phil Monahan used his fists, which were entirely at his disposal, at the same time that his lungs were strained to express his indignation. He struck the blind man two quick, following blows into the face. There was an instantaneous interference by the lookers-on. The sad, dark man who had begged on the bridge, and who had shown such affection for his worn-out dog, was recognized by nearly every one

present. It was an outrage on all that was manly and Christian-like, to strike the dark man afflicted by the hand of God, and who could not see to defend himself.

Perhaps a flash of irritation may have passed across the blind man's face, when the two hard blows were given by Phil Monahan's clenched fists. But this too was momentary. He only pushed back his assailant, to the full length of his arm, and held him so. The succeeding blows fell short of their mark. He was called on by the general voice to loose his grasp of the bellowing drunkard; and he did so. And Phil Monahan was forced away by many hands, and he was dragged this way and that way; and he was hooted at for striking the dark man,—he insisting that he had been engaged in praiseworthy combat with a peeler. He gave work enough to all who could lay hands on him to hold him in durance; he had become frantic, and roared, and screeched, and bellowed at a furious rate. And nearly the whole of the assemblage talked together, so that there was an uproar.

The dark man held himself very erect.

"My friends," he said, "this poor man is lamentably inebriated ;—do not injure him ;—quiet him if you can. I have a duty to discharge towards you and him ; I have a mission to fulfil. If I can obtain a hearing, my tale, the tale I have to tell you, may—the good God assisting—be a preservation to all that hear me."

He paused. The tumult of voices had drowned his words.

"It is useless at present," he sighed. "I cannot obtain a hearing."

As he spoke, the clamour receded from him. Phil Monahan had been mastered. Six men held his legs, and six men held his arms. And thus he was borne away, plunging to get loose, and shouting and "hoorooing" his defiance to the band of peelers holding him in bondage.

While the dark man stood and listened, a small, silky hand was placed within his. He turned his head, at the touch, and a gentle voice spoke up to him in a low but clear musical tinkle, as if a very

little silver bell were struck with a tiny silver hammer.

“Come with me,” the voice said, “away from this rude noise and contention.”

“A lady speaks to me,” the blind man returned, “a gentle and young lady, if I mistake not?—A very small and soft hand is this in mine ;—voice and hand tell me I address a young lady.”

“I am young, and I fill a lady’s station.”

“So I judged. Sweet-voiced and soft-handed young lady, I am blind, and a beggar for my daily sustenance. I am, you see, beneath your notice.”

“That you are blind I know ;—for that reason I have taken your hand to guide you. I ask it as a favour that you will be my guest to-night. Why do I make this request? Well—cannot you say that I am a spoiled child, indulged in all whims and fancies, and that I have set my heart on being your hostess for the night?—Will you not help to spoil me, as others do, and indulge me in my wish?”

“Young lady! if it be pastime at my—” the blind man hesitated, and did not finish the sentence he had begun. He resumed:—

“If amusement be your object in taking the blind beggar from his lowliness, there is little to be elicited from a man of many sorrows,—self-convicted as the author of his own misfortunes.”

“Ah! do not—do not, pray, so misunderstand me! It is not in my nature, believe me, to trifle with you, or to pain you. I saw you to-day while you stood on the bridge, and I felt for you, not the mere commiseration that bestows a dole, but the true sympathy of the heart, for one who, I felt sure, had been reduced from worldly station to extreme indigence. You may rely on the sacredness of my word that I was going forth to seek you when I met you here. Do you not credit me?”

“It is singular,—very singular. But, young lady, I do believe you. There is no levity in the accents of your sweet voice, and I do trust you.”

“Then you accept my invitation?”

“Young lady, I obey your wish.”

"Then I shall be your guide. You may intrust yourself to my care."

Hand in hand, the blind man and his conductress went on together. They entered the gate at hand, and proceeded up the avenue.

CHAPTER III.

THE DARK MAN'S STORY.

THE surmise of the blind man was correct;—his guide was young—not much beyond eighteen. He knew by touch and hearing, how velvety was her hand, how clear and musical her voice. He imagined her to be handsome; it were a pity, he thought, that the hand and voice should be matched with plain features. And the young lady *was* lovely, very lovely,—I can avouch this, as I had opportunity for judging at a shortly subsequent period.

Along a straight, old-fashioned avenue without twist or turn, they proceeded together. They crossed a bridge, the blind man knew, for he heard the water beneath chiming sweet water-music as he

passed over. Up a gentle ascent they wended, and they reached the hall-door of the mansion house before glanced at.

"We are now at our destination," the silvery voice said. The door opened without a summons, and a young man who stood within the hall, came gently forward, in obedience to the lady's signal, and lifted the dog's cart inside. The blind man's escort smiled at this gentleman, as she and her captive entered, at the same time that she held up significantly her disengaged hand.

The young girl and her companion crossed the hall, and were entering a room at hand. The blind man hesitated when he had made a step or two beyond the threshold.

"If I mistake not, lady," he said, "I am entering a softly-carpeted apartment. Is not this unfitting—as to myself—but more unseemly still that this humble friend of mine should accompany me? And from him I cannot part."

"Your dog shall accompany you and share your welcome—poor old fellow. Come along—you can

no longer recede from me if you would. I have you in my power. You are in a fairy's palace, and I am the presiding fay. Here I am absolute, and to all who enter, the power of volition is of no avail. So come, and still place your faith in me."

While the young lady thus merrily spoke, she continued to draw the blind man onward. Her soft hands placed him in an easy chair, within the influence of a cheerful fire. She it was who drew the little cart towards him, so that when he put down his hand, it rested on the old dog's head, as he lay coiled up therein.

The blind man wondered and wondered at all this, and busied himself in the endeavour to surmise what was to be the upshot of his adventure. To the questions regarding his comforts, and to other passing queries, addressed to him while, as the blind man knew by her voice, and the rustling of her dress, his hostess moved about almost noiselessly, but briskly, he endeavoured to reply as best he might, but still he wondered exceedingly.

His fair entertainer rang a bell, and a servant

answered the summons. Directions were given in a low voice, and shortly a table was placed close to the visitor's arm-chair, and his circumscribed but acute senses told him that a repast was placed thereon ; after which the servant retired.

The fairy of the enchanted palace ministered to him herself. Eagerly and hospitably she sought out his likings. She carved his meat for him with her own hands, and pressed him cordially, though not obtrusively, to partake of the fare she named to him for his selection. She filled out sparkling wine for him, but this he firmly though respectfully declined ; he had pledged himself against the use of all fermented liquors, and to this pledge, he told her, he intended, with heaven's assistance, to adhere.

Then the blind man's attendant fairy knelt and fed the dog. Perhaps this act of tenderness touched him more than even her attention to himself.

"May God bless you, child," he said ; while, as if unconsciously, he laid his hand upon her head,

which touched his knee as she knelt. The head was not withdrawn while he gave his benediction.

A servant again answered the call of the bell. The table was removed, and again, as the blind man judged, he and his hostess were the only tenants of the room.

"Now," the lady said, drawing her chair close to that of her guest, "I have a favour to ask of you. You will not refuse me?"

"Lady, if it be within my power to comply with your wishes, it would ill become me to deny you."

"While I stood near you outside our gate, you said to the people there that you were desirous to tell them the tale of your misfortunes. May I—may I be your listener—instead of those unruly men?"

The blind man bent his head towards his chest, and remained for a few minutes in deep thought. When he raised it again, the lids were closed over his sightless eyes, but there was an unmistakeable expression of sadness and solemnity about his

mouth. He spoke in a full, sonorous voice, deliberately, and as if his recollections awed him.

“Lady,” he said, “in complying with your request, I but fulfil a mission, as I hope, nay almost believe,—deputed to me. The ‘Ancient Mariner’ of Coleridge, because he slew the albatross, was doomed to wander about and recite his tale wherever he could find a listener. Like to that ‘Ancient Mariner,’ I go from place to place, and I tell my story to whomsoever will hearken to me. The doom of the Ancient Mariner was driftless and unproductive, and his recital conveyed no moral save that slaying aught unnecessarily is to be avoided.

“Yet Coleridge’s ‘Ancient Mariner’ gave me the first notion of my purpose, though in no respect, save that he recited his tale on all occasions, is there a parity between us. I shall not call my self-imposed duty a doom; it is a mission—for it is not, like the tale of the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ without object or advantage. The recital of my tale to all listeners has a two-fold aim. My main object is, to

humble myself before men with sincere penitence of heart,—and in so doing, to humble myself before the God I have offended. May that God, in his mercy, and through the merits of His Son, accept my offering! My second purpose is, to give warning by my example, and thus induce others to shun the temporal and eternal misery which is the inevitable consequence of the crime of intemperance. As regards you, young lady, my tale is scarcely fitted for your ears. It is but the recital of a reckless continuation in sin, without a palliation for the criminality. Yet I fulfil the primary object of my self-imposed mission by avowing my sinfulness to one who pities the criminal because he suffers, without scanning the justice of his punishment. I but fulfil my mission by debasing myself before one who does not take into consideration that the fate of the drunkard is of his own contrivance. My kind young listener, I will, as a mark of my contrition, deprive myself of your sweet sympathy, by revealing the enormity of my offences.”

The blind man had spoken fluently and ener-

getically. He paused for an instant to collect his thoughts. Something was resting lightly on his knee. He placed his hand where he felt the gentle pressure ; both the hands of his hostess were there clasped together, and were he not sightless he would have met the intent gaze of her soft, tear-suffused grey eyes. He gently pressed the clasped hands in his, in mute acknowledgment. Then he proceeded to his narrative.

“Some years ago,” he said, “there was no young man throughout the length and breadth of the land with whom I would have changed places. I had in my possession all the elements of happiness ; I had health, and energy, and power,—the energy to will, the power to execute. Confined to my legitimate sphere, I had abundance of worldly gifts, and the proud consciousness was mine that my abundance came to me from my own talent and industry, exercised in following an honourable and lucrative profession. For honourable is the profession I belonged to, if its duties be faithfully discharged.

“Nature had beneficently endowed me with a

joyous, elastic temperament that enabled me to spring up from the closest application light-spirited and cheerful, prompting me to good-fellowship with every one, and urging me to share my pleasurable sensations with all within my reach.

“Young lady, one essence only was wanted in my paradise. There is no pleasure in mere selfishness, no true gratification where enjoyment is not participated. Let philosophers preach up solitude as they may, youth and high spirits will not be solitary. The light of love was all I required to beam on me, and ripen my enjoyment into bliss.

“And love, pure, unalloyed, radiant love was given to me. I was beloved by a young heart, glowing with affection; and that heart was in the breast of one in outward form as lovely as the Creator’s hand ever modelled.

“My wife, my beautiful Ellen, loved me with all her heart’s fondness. And oh! I loved my Ellen with a passion that could not freeze—God knows I did! Believe me, child, that even in my uttermost abandonment—even while I was madly

and profanely crushing my darling's tender heart to death, I loved my wife to adoration.

"In my self-accusation I have often thought that if a fiend were despatched from the place of eternal punishment, and that his mission was to seek out where human happiness had been bountifully disposed, and having found that abode of happiness to contaminate by his suggestions, and to blight and darken whatever he could not contaminate—I have said to myself that this fiend so commissioned would have entered under my roof. In what light then, am *I* to regard myself, who as effectually destroyed the happiness of my home as that fiend could have done?"

"Oh!" said the listener in a trembling voice, "your self-accusation is too harsh—too bitter."

"No, young lady, my self-accusals are merited. I became an incorrigible, irreclaimable drunkard. The fiend contaminated me, and then, as his agent, I perfected the work. I arraign myself before you, before the world, and before my God, as a murderer. Not actually as a shedder of blood—and

yet a murderer. I was the cause indirectly of my children's death, and directly I was the destroyer of my wife, and more cruelly her destroyer than if with my hands I had taken her life. I was the slayer of my beautiful and beloved wife ;—I slew her in return for her heart's devotedness.

“ Oh God ! Oh God ! ” the blind man exclaimed, and he turned up his sightless eyes, and smote his breast with his clenched hand.

“ Oh God ! Oh God ! ” he cried, “ have mercy upon me !—have mercy upon me ! ”

The blind man's petition for mercy was a burst of passionate entreaty, and joining his hands together, he bent his head lowly, and for a while prayed silently.

“ Forgive me, young lady,” he then resumed, in a moderated tone of voice. “ Forgive me ; I perceive that I have pained you.”

The subdued emotion of his listener was not unnoticed by him. She was weeping, and the agitated breathing that heaved her bosom was detected by his ear.

“Unfortunately,” he said, depressedly and sadly, “the tale I have to tell yields no pleasure to the hearer. It is a tale of sin, and of the woe that follows sin.”

There was no answer ; but the blind man’s hand was pressed by the soft clasp that had led him to the easy chair in which he sat.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DARK MAN'S STORY ENDED.

THE blind man bowed his head in thankfulness for the silent sympathy evinced towards him, and then resumed his story.

“When the second purpose of my mission is to be discharged ;—when the reclamation of others, or their preservation from evil by the warning of example, are to be kept in view, I recount my step-by-step descent from comparative innocence to crime. Before you I present myself as a penitent ; as a penitent I wish to appear before all who will so receive me. But I will not wound your ears by relating the gradation of my fall. It will suffice to tell you that I became a reckless, heedless drunkard, and that loss of station, loss of

worldly substance, loss of home and happiness, and—were not God's mercy infinite—loss of the hope of salvation followed.

“Three of my lovely children died almost in their infancy ; my wife took refuge from me in the grave.

“It will shock you to be told that as I followed the remains of my wife to the place of burial, I went with unsteady step, for I was intoxicated. The occurrences of that day come to me only as the reminiscence of a confused and horrid dream,—the recollection, as it were, of a phantom,—most appalling and terrific, grasping me with unconquerable power, but undefined and shapeless—vast and overwhelming.

“I remember that as I staggered behind my slaughtered Ellen's coffin to the graveyard, it appeared to me that I was the centre of a throng of accusing spirits that upbraided me as I went along. I remember looking down into the grave as the clay was tumbled in, and that I would have craved to be buried too, but that I knew I was unworthy to occupy the same resting-place with one so chaste

and pure. I remember saying to myself that my dead wife would heave the coffin-lid and reject me, did I contaminate it by my touch.

“It is on my memory that I knelt at the grave’s foot when it was covered in, and that I tried to pray, but that my tongue refused to utter, and that I durst not pray because of my unworthiness. I remember that I flung myself on the newly-tenanted grave in oblivious despair.

“I have now spent years probing my memory, to discover how long I may have so remained prostrate under the load of remorse that pressed on me with a mountain’s weight. To this hour I cannot tell whether it was a night, or nights and days that I remained there. Nor can I inform you with anything like confidence in my accuracy as to the succession of events, whether it was while I supposed myself to be stretched on my wife’s grave,—whether it was anteriorly, or whether it was subsequently,—that the astounding transfiguration I am now about to relate came to pass.

“Whether then, whether before, or whether after,

—this is certain. That bodily, I stood before the throne of God, to be judged by him,—to be judged for my iniquities ;—to be judged for my riotousness and debauchery ;—to be judged as the slayer of the children given to me for protection,—as the murderer of the wife of my bosom. I stood bodily before the throne of God for judgment.”

“Oh no !—oh no !—the phantasy of a perturbed mind this was.”

“Child, you are not the first to tell me so. Many have said the same. Therefore have I studiously subjected myself to close examination. Child ! this was no phantasm. I have been enabled, through the cautious mental scrutiny of years, to separate the real from the illusive. I have been enabled to distinguish the abhorrent visions of grimacing imps, and the loathsome, crawling reptiles that my brain’s delusion shaped, from the positive reality.

“I repeat it ; I stood bodily before the throne of the Most High to abide my judgment. It was more an innate consciousness of the Presence in which I

stood that told me this, than the evidence of my senses. There was a supernatural brightness all around me. I could discern the vibration of the celestial atmosphere, as the ethereal spirits passed me on their missions. But I could see naught beyond the great brightness; my unworthy eyes were not permitted to behold aught else. My ears were filled with Hallelujahs!—ever and ever floating through the air. I stood, as I knew and felt, in the Almighty Presence, shrinking and despairing. And when the “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” was chaunted by the Heavenly Choir I knew that my Judge was approaching, and I kept my lips hard-pressed against each other, lest blasphemies might issue thence,—blasphemies such as the fiends utter when their doom is for eternity!”

There was an insane working of the blind man’s features as he went on with his description. The perspiration poured from his temples down his face, and both his hands were stretched forward to their utmost strain. He continued, speaking rapidly and energetically :

“A dazzling illumination appeared opposite to where I stood, and a voice, fearful in its intensity, issued thence. I heard the dread summons, ‘Stand forward!’—and I moved towards the brightness. Even within the radiance, four forms rose slowly to my sight. My wife stood there in her grave-clothes, but radiated with the glory surrounding her. She looked on me with eyes of pity, yet I felt that she was there as my accuser before the throne. And my three children were there—angels I knew them to be, yet they glared at me in abhorrence. Then the voice, more astounding than the thunder-clap that rattles just above the head,—cried out, and pronounced my sentence.

“‘Depart from me, you accursed,’ it said. And at the same instant, another voice, like the hissing of a serpent formed to human speech, shrieked out—‘*He is mine—he is mine—he is mine!*’—Oh!” the blind man broke in, dropping his hands, while his head suddenly drooped forward, and his voice sounded hollow and unnatural—

“Oh! the horror of that moment no words of

mine can tell! I sprang up and I raced forward. Whither to run I could not at first tell. I ran to escape from the fiend into whose custody I had been given. I ran—ran headlong.

“I remembered afterwards that I was hurled down precipices. That I buffeted the current of a river. That I scaled hills, and plunged into hollows. That I scrambled through thorny thickets. That I waded through deep morasses. But no obstacle could stay me. Step for step,—whether I tumbled, or whether I climbed, or whether I waded, or scrambled, or swam,—I heard the fiend almost in contact with me—in close pursuit. Wherever I went the fiend tracked me.

“I came within sight of the roaring sea, and I heard it thundering and chafing, hundreds of feet below me. I claimed kindred with the uproar of the mighty waters; I reached the highest cliff above the turmoil; I stooped my body, to give greater impetus to the death-plunge. On the extreme edge of the precipice, I was seized and held back, and pulled inward from the cliff. For a moment I

struggled to get loose, that I might accomplish my deadly purpose. That moment of hesitation saved me. The dread of rushing unbidden into the presence of an angry God came upon me, and maniac that I was, I trembled. The superhuman vigour that had until now upheld me was no longer with me. At the same moment that the recollection of the eternal doom before me, if I presumptuously stood face to face with the Almighty, struck terror to my soul, the unnatural strength and resolution that had borne me up, faded away, and I fell forward, powerless and exhausted."

"It was the merciful Hand of God that stayed you!"

"Yes, young lady, in gratitude and thanksgiving I acknowledge the Divine interference. If, without even one tear of penitence, in the balance against my sins, I had audaciously forced myself into eternity, with the additional crime of self-murder on my soul,—I was lost, for time and eternity. Yes!—I do thankfully acknowledge the Hand of Heaven between me and the fate I had

presumptuously dared to meet. God, in His Providence, often uses the simplest means to effect His wisest purposes. It was so in my case.

“There was an agency to which I owe my salvation. The agent was this dog that you see here near me now. This disabled dog that you see was my saviour. Even from my wife’s grave he followed me; through all my wild race he followed me. While I couched, as does the tiger, preparatory to my spring from the cliff’s brow, he it was—this my faithful dog!—that held me back. To him I owe it that time has been given me to weep over my offences. To him I owe it that the hope of mercy is mine.

“This feeble dog was then in his prime—robust and strong. And he held me from my doom, while the Divine mandate came forbidding my self-murder. My poor dog is now old and worn out; he has lived beyond the usual term of life given to his species. But as long as life is in him he shall share whatever the blind man has to share. For is he not my saviour—strong and faithful in

his attachment, and the instrument of my preservation?"

"Indeed, indeed the noble brute deserves your attachment and your gratitude."

"I even owe to him more than I now tell you. I cannot tell how long I may have remained senseless where I fell. I was restored to consciousness by him. His tongue, gently licking my wounded face, was the first sensation I felt of my recovery. Then came the thought of quitting the spot where I had been tempted to self-slaughter. I was bruised and lacerated, and crept along with difficulty. The desire came on me to go away, no matter where, to the greatest possible distance from the scene of my transgression. The pride of nature was not yet subdued, and I loathed the idea of being seen or recognized. While it was yet dark I crept on. The first day I burrowed in a sandhill. The next night, I walked as fast as I could trail my wounded body. And when day came on again, I hid, as the beasts that roam by night hide themselves from the light. I was wounded from head to

foot, and my progress was but slow. As I lay in my concealment, hunger, ravenous hunger gnawed me, and yet I would not go amongst my fellow-creatures to seek for succour. Would you believe it?—This dog, now so decrepit, brought me food, and we devoured it together. How he procured it I cannot tell, but more than once he fed me in my lair. On, on I went, though only through the darkness of night,—I knew or cared not whither. At length I sank, exhausted, and unable to proceed. My dog did not abandon me. I must have perished in the den of my concealment but for him. He sought aid, and charitable people came, and bore me to a refuge. In a workhouse far away from my native place I was placed. The story of my dog had gained friends for him, and he was not parted from me. I passed through a fearful probation of delirious disease. And for some months I lay, unable bodily or mentally to take care of myself. During the scramble from my wife's grave to the sea, my eyes had been lacerated, and I was told that thorns had been extracted from them.

When I went forth at length, I was blind. And now, for two years, I have begged for my sustenance where none could recognize me, or trace my disgraceful career."

For some time the blind man had spoken calmly and resignedly.

"And now," he said, sighing deeply, "my tale is told. I shall add but little more. I have told you that there is a self-imposed mission to be discharged. What this duty is, I have explained to you.

"My lowliness has brought with it a wholesome sense of humility. The pride which caused me to flee away from the scene of my prosperity and happiness has left me altogether. I am now travelling to the spot where my wife lies buried, that I may pray for forgiveness on her grave. I will no longer shun the scorn of those who knew me in the hey-day of my prosperity. I will humbly abide their recognition, and acknowledge the justice of their censure.

"Another object still, impels me to return whence I came. When I fled from the opprobrium of those who were cognizant of my transgressions, I had a

son. He was a boy of splendid promise. In outward form and in feature, none could excel my boy. His, too, was a noble spirit. Daring, and brave, and generous he was, ardent and impulsive as a youth should be. But his manly nature was easily softened to gentleness when his affections influenced him. His mother's heart of devotion, and his mother's tenderness of nature, beautifully tempered his boyish impetuosity.

"Basely selfish as I was, I abandoned this glorious boy. Impelled by selfish pride, my only desire was to flee away without leaving a trace by which I could be tracked from the scene of my downfall. Mingled with my pride, there was self-detestation, and I found a surly gratification in subjecting myself to extreme hardships. I disguised my selfish pride by saying to myself: 'Twere better my boy should have no father than that he should be forced to hide his head and screen himself from identity with the degraded man whom all—even he—must abhor, as the slayer of his mother.'

"So I abandoned my boy. My flight from him

was the same as if I were dead to him, and the only bequest I left him was the evil of a tarnished name — which 'twere better he should repudiate. Twice opportunities offered to make cautious inquiries after my son, but I could gain no tidings of him.

“The pride that swayed me has, I hope, been replaced by penitence and humility. And I am now, as I have told you, on my way to kneel at my wife's grave. When there I will ask where I may turn to seek her son. From that grave I will follow in his track, and I will continue to wander, wherever the faintest footprint may guide me, until I find him. I will meet my son. But our meeting shall be in secret, there shall be no witness to it.

“I do not seek my boy from a worldly motive. I do not seek him to claim his recognition of the sightless beggar you have sheltered. Oh, no, no! Although my heart yearns to meet my deserted child, our meeting shall be, as I have said, without witness. I am resolved to travel far and near, to reach him. When I and my boy meet, I

will kneel submissively to him. On my knees I will beseech of him, for the love of God, to grant me his forgiveness for the injuries I have heaped on his young head. On my knees I will implore him to grant me pardon in his own name, and then to pronounce a pardon in his mother's—in the name of that mother I so cruelly hustled into her early grave.

“In my very inmost heart I have cherished the hope that my supplication will not be unavailing. If I do not altogether misapprehend the character of my son, he will not refuse the boon his penitent father craves. Then, in return for the pardon granted, I will supplicate for heaven's blessing upon him. The blessing even of an unworthy father is of value to the child. Then I will depart from him—none but he and I knowing of the tie between us. Again I will wander away from him, begging for my subsistence as I now do. Never again will I obtrude myself on his presence. Never again shall he look on his unworthy father. I will not remain near him—a stumbling-block in his path.

"Father!!!"

Came from a manly, but agitated voice, close by the blind man's ear. While at the same time, the beggar's outstretched hand was eagerly grasped, and pressed with an ardent pressure.

"Father—dear, dear father!" echoed the weeping hostess. And as she so addressed him, she flung her arms round his neck, and her lips were pressed to his cheek.

The blind man rose from his seat, and stood to his full height. His forehead was raised upward, his brows were slightly drawn together, and his lips quivered.

"Who is it calls me father?" he asked in accents that told the depth of his emotion.

"Your son—the son you seek, father, holds your hand in his, while your daughter's arms are now round your neck. Your daughter she is, for she is your son's bride."

"Is it the voice of my deserted boy I hear acknowledging me as his father?"

"Richard O'Meara, your son, speaks to you, and

claims a child's right to succour and to love his father."

"Then you have been a listener to my tale—to the story of a penitent heart?"

"Father, I have been your sympathizing listener all through."

The blind man withdrew his hand from that of his son. Gently, but decisively, he unloosed the soft arms that clung to him. He knelt, and joined his hands together, and raised them upward to the full extent of his arms.

"God of mercy!" he prayed, "receive my thanksgiving for this thy goodness. Receive the thanksgiving of a grateful heart."

"My son—" he said, after a brief silence, "I wish to touch you with my hands, for I am blind, you know, and cannot see you."

"I am close to you, father."

The blind man stretched out both his hands, and grasped his son's knees.

"You have heard my tale," he cried out, "and you know why it is that I was wandering in search

of you. Here, kneeling at your feet, I supplicate your forgiveness. My son, I am a humble petitioner for your pardon,—pardon for the heartless injustice I have done you,—pardon for your father's criminal example to your boyhood."

"Father, father!" expostulated the young man, "do not humiliate yourself thus. It is unnatural. Rise, father, rise!"

And he endeavoured, but in vain, to raise the kneeling suppliant.

"From this contrite position I will not rise, my son, until I feel your hand upon my head, and hear your voice pronounce my pardon. Pardon—pardon for my sins against yourself!—and, oh! pardon for my still more heinous offences against your mother!"

"Father," the young man answered, laying his hand upon his parent's head, and speaking in a voice so broken that it was scarce articulate, "father! from my heart do I forgive you. In my own name, and in my mother's name, I forgive you. Rise, father,—rise." †

The blind man snatched the hand that rested on

his head. He pressed his lips against it fervently. As he did so, the tears gushed from his sightless eyes, and fell fast upon his pledge of pardon. And when he arose, still weeping, he turned his face upward, and prayed.

While the union between father and son progressed, the ancient dog, Teague, raised himself in his cart. By his scent he understood that his playmate of former days held intercourse with his master. He attempted to enunciate his old-times Wow—wow—wow of recognition. But the feeble whine of age mingled with its bygone mellowness.

The dog Teague was not the only approving party to the union of parent and child. When young Richard O'Meara first advanced from the obscurity of the room to accost his father, another figure moved forward at the same time. This other person progressed in a somewhat irregular manner. He carried a stout cudgel, which he raised up and put down as noiselessly as possible, so as to produce no sound by contact with the carpet. Leaning on his stealthy cudgel, he put his left foot forward very

softly, a step in advance ; then he crimped himself to one side, that he might draw off the second support of his body. This he raised with all imaginable caution, and placed it carefully beneath him. So he made his way, as silently as a cat could creep. Close by the blind man's chair he stood undetected, as erect as a statue ; and when the son had pronounced his father's forgiveness, and while they stood hand-in-hand together, the Half-pay saluted the blind man's shoulders with a thwack of his cudgel, while he barked out—

“ Maw—maw !—Wel-come !—Wel-come ! ”

Teague emitted for the second time his Wow—wow—wow of recognition, in the whine of tottering senility. For he recollected the Half-pay's voice, and his faculties being blunted by extreme old age, he supposed that his fast friend the Half-pay had addressed him personally, by inviting him to shake hands, as in the days of yore.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION.

MY narrative and its sequel have now been brought to a close. What I have further to say I will tell as briefly as I can. I do not myself like to be held by the button listening to tiresome recapitulations, and I will not detain the reader's button between my finger and thumb longer than need be.

In the Manor House where the union between father and son was accomplished, the person hitherto known as the Half-pay was born. In childhood he was a mischievous urchin. Whatever commands might be issued were no laws to him; no corner of the house was free from his intrusion; and wherever he penetrated, mischief done left traces of his visit.

In his boyhood he preferred any pastime to the restraint of sitting in a schoolroom, gaping stupidly at a book ; and neither the cat-o'-nine-tails, then in vogue, or the horsewhip at home had any effect in communicating a taste for letters. On one occasion his stern, uncompromising father had had him tied to a staple in a dark room, where he was to be left in durance until his outlaw spirit should be subdued. He set to work with his teeth, however, severed the rope that held him in bondage, and, immediately following his restoration to liberty, he might be seen mounted bare-backed on the best hunter in his father's stable, and close up with the hounds full cry in pursuit of a fox. And home he rode triumphant, rope and staple entirely forgotten, with Reynard's brush in his cap, accorded to him by the acclamation of the field.

There were two persons in the Manor House who could control him—his mother, and a sister one year younger than himself. Scamp as he was, his mother loved him ; for he would press her in his arms until she cried for quarter. To his mother's

gentle remonstrance he always yielded for the immediate time. And in his sister's case, the fable of the wolf and the lamb was reversed. The wolf trotted in the footsteps of the lamb, whenever the lamb caressed the wolf.

His mother died. One governing impulse was gone, and the lamb's persuasion was only occasional. When his father and his steady, well-conducted cunning and condemning brother spoke of him, they called him the "rebel,"—and a rebel to authority he certainly was.

When his manhood came on he acknowledged no constraint. Unless the horses were put away, he rode them when he fancied, one after the other, without regard to ownership. He scattered the coveys of partridges the nineteenth of September, without waiting for the legal day. He danced at patterns, romped with girls wherever he met them, and—he was very often tipsy.

In his twentieth year, while his exemplary brother was in council with his father, increasing the rent-roll and controlling the expenditure, he, "the

rebel," fell in love with the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman farmer, in station beneath himself.

For him the "light of love" was a furnace-fire, self-consuming, if no soluble material were supplied. The object of his attachment was very beautiful—her beauty had set the furnace blazing. She was very gentle, and her admirer's ardent addresses rather terrified her, and made her shrink from all contact. She refused to be consumed, and her white-heated lover determined on abduction. He succeeded in carrying her off, but she was rescued from him. He was compelled to fly to avoid the consequences of his illegal act, and his inflamer married her deliverer, to whom she had been long engaged.

When a year or two had passed by, his sister heard from him. He had enlisted as a soldier, and was then in a regiment of the line as a non-commissioned officer. Family pride induced his father to purchase an ensigncy for him, and at Corunna, where Moore was interred "with his martial cloak around him," my hero, then holding the rank of

captain, received two dangerous wounds. A ball took advantage, while he was shouting to his men, to enter his open mouth, and passing through his neck, injured his colloquial organs. Hence his few words. His leg was also shattered above the knee ; amputation was pronounced necessary. Hence the necessity for a wooden leg, transformed subsequently, as has been narrated, into a composite leg.

Quitting the wars, when needs must, he made his way home to the place of his birth. His father was dead. His sister having made an imprudent love-match, had been left a widow with one daughter to maintain on scanty means. His brother, now lord paramount, was a grasping, dishonest miser. The captain was tipsy when he presented himself to his nearest relative ; this nearest relative disowned him. And so, with fifty pounds per annum, in addition to his half-pay—a long arrear being due to him,—he shook the dust from his feet at the paternal threshold, and set off, he knew not or cared not whither. He was set down, as we have seen, in "The Town of the Cascades."

The Half-pay's reverence for Ellen O'Meara was not of instantaneous growth. She was the daughter of his first and only love, and as like her mother as she could be in features and character.

The Half-pay's brother was the dishonest guardian who retained the orphan's dower until obliged by legal process to disgorge it.

From this it will be understood why, exclusive of personal attachment to the boy, the Half-pay adopted the grandson of the terrified girl who had made a soldier of him.

A few days previous to the death of Ellen O'Meara the Half-pay had received an intimation from his agent—the letter still addressed to the mysterious P. W.—that his brother had died childless and intestate, and that he was the legal inheritor of a large property.

Shortly after arriving at his mansion with his knapsack on his back and his adopted son by the hand, he learned that his sister had died, leaving her daughter very poor. He brought the little girl to his home, and, in his own way, was a kind father to

her. His adopted son and his niece, just as he wished it to be, became fondly attached to each other, so, without loss of time he joined their hands at the altar.

The Christmas-eve with which the sequel of my narrative opens, the Half-pay, now Captain Patrick Wemyss of Wemyss Hall, stumped through the town near at hand, accompanied by his niece. He remarked the silent beggar on the bridge. He was almost certain of his man, but under the long-settled belief that Richard O'Meara had perished in the sea, he resolved to make himself quite certain regarding him.

He communicated his suspicions to his niece, without consulting his adopted son; and at his suggestion, urged by her own goodness of heart, she was setting out to ascertain the reality of her uncle's surmises, when she met the blind man on the road.

The blind Richard O'Meara was not long domiciled with his son, until Michael and Mary Hanrahan were sought out, and raised to what they

regarded as great opulence. Mary was the young wife's friend and adviser ; Michael was the factotum of the household. Captain Patrick Wemyss of Wemyss Hall, was the blind man's guide and assistant whenever he went forth to fulfil his mission. Teague, the ancient mastiff, died of extreme old age shortly after his renewed intimacy with Captain Patrick Wemyss, the Half-pay.

And so ends the sequel to my narrative.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

